

**THE BLIND
MARKSMAN**
EDITH MARY MOORE

Please keep this card in
book pocket

Please keep this card in
book pocket

CHRISTIANITY IN THE

PART .L TITL

42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79

[illegible]

ENDOWED BY THE
DIALECTIC AND PHILANTHROPIC
SOCIETIES

PR6025
.0 673
B6

45

Edward Carpenter
with love

Saith M. M.

June - Russell

UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



00027562682

THE UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA
LIBRARY



PRESENTED BY THE
WILLIAM A. WHITAKER
FOUNDATION



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

THE BLIND MARKSMAN



THE BLIND MARKSMAN

BY
EDITH MARY MOORE

PR 612
5673
56

HODDER AND STOUGHTON LTD
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

Works by the same Author

THREE ESSAYS IN NOVEL WRITING

THE LURE OF EVE

(Title supplied by publishers).

THE WRONG SIDE OF DESTINY

**THE IDEALIST AND MARY
TREHERNE**

SHORT STORIES

**THE WOMAN WHO WAS
ALOYSIA**

A BLUE UPRIGHT

A LIGHT-HEARTED STORY OF THE WAR

TEDDY, R.N.D.

A ROMANCE OF DARTMOOR

THE SPIRIT AND THE LAW

CONTENTS

PART I

	PAGE
JANE INTRUDES - - - - -	9

PART II

CONCERNING THINGS JANE TRIES TO DISCOVER - - - - -	41
---	----

PART III

JANE AND ROMANCE - - - - -	93
----------------------------	----

PART IV

MARRIAGE - - - - -	141
--------------------	-----

PART V

ANTHONY - - - - -	189
-------------------	-----

PART VI

UNDEFEATED - - - - -	279
----------------------	-----

DEAR EDWARD CARPENTER :

Will you accept this book with my love and gratitude ; love for the privilege of your friendship, gratitude for all your work has taught me.

You will understand the Jane of these pages ; whereas I am aware that many an independent young woman of to-day will be impatient, if not angry, with her ; and with the Victorian obscurities and dilemmas of her environment.

But though Youth may attempt to regard the last century as an era unrelated to their own lives, it is very actively with us yet. We, who are the parents, advisers, teachers of to-day were reared under its traditions and sanctions. However splendid and audacious the rebellions of youth may be, they are opposed by the heritage of an artificial and profitless society ; and the young will need wisdom as well as high spirits to build a world more fit for the high adventures of Youth and Love.

For the young woman there is the building of the Home of our passionate Dream. For the young man the creating of a world of spiritual rather than material enterprise.

You, who have written with so much wisdom of the triune complex of our difficult lives—body, mind and spirit—will understand where I have failed and where I have succeeded in writing of the obscurities and frustations of one woman's life.

Your affectionate and beholden friend,

EDITH MARY MOORE.

LONDON, *January*, 1920.

PART I
JANE INTRUDES

" Is it warm in that green valley,
Vale of childhood where you dwell ?
Is it calm in that green valley,
Round whose bowers such great hills swell ?
Are there giants in the valley—
Giants leaving footprints yet ?
Are there angels in the valley ?
Tell me—I forget."

1.

It was hot in the yard, hot and civilised. The dog stood before his kennel, hanging out a dry, quivering tongue. He had relinquished hope of a run for that day; unless some whim now loosed him, and ran him too far in the dusty rear of the wagonette.

From the walls of the stable an advertisement of Hatchout flared. The hens huddled underneath it; unconscious that man by this potent food had reduced them to egg machines. Their life was short in obedience to a new theory of making poultry pay, and they were killed off in rotation in their third year. They had been hatched in an age which demanded payment in coin as the standard of life value, and where what was without such price perished under a ban of uselessness.

Up the carriage drive, beyond the enclosed yard, wheels came, turning over the gritty surface gravel. The dog barked shortly, and as a matter of habit; then pricked his ears as he heard the voice of Joseph talking to the coachman who had driven up to the door. They talked so long that he became tired of staying at attention and sank down panting before his kennel. Presently however he got up and stood stiff and growling. A strange sound had reached him; a low foreboding sound of distress. He growled and fidgeted; dragging his chain up and down over the uneven bricks of the yard.

The man Joseph opened the yard-gate and said, "Lie down, you noisy brute." The hens rushed forward in their stupid precipitate way looking for food; "I'll 'ave to feed them fowls," he said to the coachman, who replied confidentially, "I hope she'll hurry up."

Joseph nodded, as suggesting things outside the limits of everyday speech, and went into the yard.

As he flung the grain to the birds the gate was torn open hurriedly, and his wife, Pollie, rushed up to him.

"It's over, thank goodness!" she said, and wiped her eyes and face on her apron.

"What is it?" asked Joseph laconically. He had no

intention of showing interest in a fact he held to be one entirely concerned with women.

"Another girl."

"Um—that won't please 'em."

"No—pore little soul."

Her husband's small grey eyes blinked over the yard, prepared to light with sagacity things other than material.

"Rum go," he muttered.

"What?" said his wife impatiently. Men were aggravating creatures at moments like the present, when the essential thing to a woman is to talk, and talk, and talk.

"This 'ere baby," he said. Again his eyes ranged the yard; a large part of whose paraphernalia dealt with new life. He had been trained to bestow much care and discrimination upon the breeding of animals and birds; and some dim intuition stirred him of the negligent initiation of the human life whose coming had disturbed the house that day. He came near to being aware of its inception on the ebb-tide of an irresponsible hour; the regret, almost the resentment of the parents, as soon as it assumed a life character. "Rum go!" he muttered again. For these are not points to discuss with women; least of all with one's wife.

"Well, they won't git anything to eat if I stays here talking to you," said she, to cover a natural chagrin which she did not intend to show, at not being invited to share his mental wanderings.

"I feel like a good bust-out myself," said Joseph. "I hates births, and weddings, and funerals."

Mrs. Cane walked back to the hushed house; where even the feather-headed housemaid, Harris, had been scared from giggling.

There have been beautiful and tender things written about the coming of children; of the tragedy and indifference which usher in many lives we do not care to hear.

A telegram had brought the master of the house home early; he sat in the dining-room, hot and worried, wondering why on earth the baby couldn't have been a boy.

It was late in the evening when the mother woke from her sleep of exhaustion. The nurse, smart and good-natured, held the baby towards her.

"It isn't very fat," said Susan Arrobus languidly. "Has my husband come home?"

"I'm sure she looks a dear little thing now she is dressed," said the nurse pugnaciously ; and she went to call the husband.

He came into the room awkwardly, carrying a bunch of roses, and bent and kissed his wife with clumsy tenderness.

"I suppose you're sorry it's another girl," he said, for the sake of saying something.

"Of course I am." Her large pale blue eyes looked up at him and filled with slow tears. Not unbecoming tears. Susan Arrobus hated unbecoming things.

"Well, it can't be helped, can it, nurse?" said Arrobus, blustering and uncomfortable. "And boys are an infernal expense."

"Can I see Phyllis, or is she asleep?" asked his wife.

"I'll go and see," he said, glad to escape from the room ; where "that damned nurse will be for the next month," he thought.

He returned in a few minutes with a little girl of about eight. She had flushed cheeks, and long golden hair ; one of those peculiarly doll-like lovely children which England produces.

"Darling," whispered the mother, and held out open arms which she had refused to the baby.

"May I see it?" asked the child excitedly ; and tiptoed over to the cradle of lace and silk. From the froth of this the baby's face looked out ; incredibly small, with eyes peculiarly dark and round.

The child stared down upon it, but was afraid to kiss it. She walked slowly back to her mother.

"Was I ugly like that?"

"You were very pretty." Her mother passed a delicate, exhausted hand over the shining head. "This one is ugly enough to be a boy ; I don't know why it isn't. . . . You must run away now and go to sleep."

The child smiled a pleased, conscious smile ; she had discovered that it was an important thing to be pretty, and already felt a comforting contempt for children who were not.

The nurse waited upon her patient sulkily. She expected the new baby to be the paramount interest in the houses through which she passed.

"Missis going on all right?" asked Mrs. Cane of her the next morning.

"She's all right," rejoined the nurse, with unfeeling

emphasis. "But that poor little baby is going to be brought up on artificial food. And she a healthy young woman. But all she cares about is 'Get me down again as soon as you can.'"

"Well, she's used to going out a lot," said Mrs. Cane; who had her own views on the subject, but was not going to share them with an outsider. "I daresay you like change yourself, nurse; you git plenty of it, anyways."

"I've seen too much of marriage to get married," snorted the nurse. "If I was ever fool enough to forget, I shouldn't take vengeance on an innocent babe by not doing my duty to it."

Her frustrated maternal instinct being aroused she watched over the baby with harassed and undiminished solicitude through the first six weeks of its life. It wailed often, day and night; the heat was exceptional, and no food could be found to suit it.

The mother, delicately pretty, resumed her everyday life at the end of three weeks. Before the nurse left she was playing a gentle game of tennis, on the shady lawns which stretched either side of the carriage drive bordered by standard roses.

"You really are a marvel, Susan," said Arrobus; thankful to come home to a normal household, and praying his gods that no other nine months of repining and tearfulness lay before him.

Sometimes he glanced at the baby and called it a rum little beggar. He recognised himself as the financial parent, whose business it was to pay the piper, and whose further obligation did not extend beyond a sentimental interest at what time she should be old enough to wheedle him out of things.

Visitors also declared Susan Arrobus to be a marvel, and discussed at length with her the new fashions, now that she might have a waist again. They were not often allowed to see the new baby.

"She really *is* ugly," declared Susan, with a charming shrug, which deprecated any share she might have had in such a calamity. "And has lost weight, so I can't be proud of her. But of course the weather has been *terrific*. No; I didn't have any trouble about not feeding her—just a little discomfort for a few days, but it was worth it."

The summer was long, and of almost unvarying heat,

and the baby languished through it. When the nurse left it was constantly regarded as a nuisance, for money was short and Mrs. Arrobus had decided not to engage another servant.

"Couldn't you manage to cut off something else, just for a few months, and get a nurse for her?" asked Arrobus.

"How can you ask that, George, after all the bills you showed me last evening? I must have new clothes; you can't expect me to go about in the ones I had before she was born."

Arrobus mopped his head, and looked with some animosity towards the cradle, from which came a fretful complaining. It was the half-hour before dinner; the baby refused to go to sleep, and Mrs. Cane and the housemaid were busy about the meal. He shrugged his shoulders, walked over to the decanter and poured whisky and soda into a glass.

A soothing indifference to noise began to calm his irritation; he looked affectionately at his wife sitting by the cradle, half tearful and aggrieved, spasmodically rocking it.

"Don't upset yourself over the little beggar," he said. "She will soon grow up, thank goodness!"

He got up meditatively and surveyed the garden through which the carriage drive, yellow under the sun, swept curving between standard roses to the gate. The house was something to be proud of—his own freehold—artistic into the bargain—as he always pointed out, and with some excuse, set as it was among monstrous houses of the mid-Victorian period. It was of red brick, with a verandah running along the front, pointed gables, with climbing roses about it.

He worked from morning to night to "keep up" things as his wife said they ought to be kept up. They spent a thousand a year or more, and it was disappointing that there should always be debts, whereas in the days when they lived on four pounds a week there had been none. He did not blame his wife with any insistence for this. She had often pointed out to him that she was no business woman; and somehow, especially when he had just pulled off a good thing, he was conscious of feeling pride in her incapability; and in his regard of her as an expensive creature, kept solely for his enjoyment; even though her accompanying degree of economic power proved dangerous to the security of his income and peace.

He poured himself out another whisky, and said:

"Why don't you get some decent girl from the village to come in and take the kid out in the afternoons, and stay until she goes to sleep?"

"Perhaps I could do that," assented Susan.

Finding him expansive and jovial over dinner she kissed the thinning place on his head, and crooned, "I hope you'll bring off something really big this winter; there are bound to be extra bills to meet. You know, I haven't looked decent for so long, and it is such a relief to be able to think about ordinary clothes again."

Her clinging dependence pleased his after-dinner masculine mood; he jingled the loose coins in his pocket with a sense of prosperity. "I daresay the land scheme near Crouch End will come off. If it does I ought to scoop in a fair amount."

He spread himself on the hearth, satisfied with what he had accomplished with his life. He was thirty-five and a self-made man, who had entered an office of land agents at sixteen, fallen in love with Susan at twenty, married her at twenty-four, and had brought her to this "desirable country mansion" at thirty. It was well done! Few men, in an age of prosperous men, had done as much.

Everything glowed and shone with newness in the room; nothing invited any sense of ancestor worship, or owed fealty to a durable if forgotten past. Everything was aggressively of the present, including the master and mistress. Susan might have proffered the house as an excuse for the length of her dress-bills, for it demanded new clothes.

She began to recount small scandals to him, the telling of which served to emphasise her own worth.

George Arrobus accepted them without any glance on their intention. His wife still held in his fancy the place into which she had stepped when he first fell in love with her. "An angel" she seemed to him, with her fair protesting beauty; and it had pleased him to keep alive the youthful illusion. The only thing perhaps left him from the world of imagination; and rooted deeper in the divine instinct of the race than he was likely to guess.

2.

A young girl from the village was engaged, on the strength of the milkman's recommendation, to take charge of the baby

daily from nine in the morning until six. Her interest, however, became centred upon the mother rather than on her charge. She spent hours trying to make her hair "go" like Mrs. Arrobus's, and most of her wages endeavouring to copy her clothes.

When she wheeled the perambulator down the drive of a morning, Susan would wave a hand in farewell; though the baby was too young to heed.

"Golly! she do look pretty in that pink muslin," thought the girl, and ran the perambulator on to the lawn. Her mistress gently shook her head from the verandah, and the girl called back, "She's all right, m'm." Mrs. Arrobus smiled sweetly; she coveted admiration from all.

Sometimes the girl took the baby up the narrow lane to the cottage where she lived. She chose her mother's washing days, when they could talk undisturbed. The baby was laid on a dingy sofa near the steaming tub. If she cried, she was taken up and jiggled, and given strange things to suck. Once the girl forgot to fasten the strap across the perambulator, and as she hurriedly wheeled it down the broken cottage path, it lurched over and the baby fell out. The woman ran out and picked her up.

"She don't seem to be bruised, and you'd better say nothing about it, or you'll lose your place. Wot were you doing of to let it over like that?"

The frightened girl expended a vast amount of cuddling and kissing on the baby for the rest of the day.

The baby was christened Jane; a name chosen by her mother the Sunday afternoon after the birth, when she had listened irritably to suggestions from her husband and the nurse, and had said of a sudden and with no intention:

"I shall call her Jane."

The nurse laughed ironically, "Oh! of course." George muttered, "Poor little beggar!" This opposition settled the matter. Susan flared out: "You both seem amused, but I intend her to be called Jane. I see nothing amusing in the name. One of our duchesses—I forget which—is Jane."

3.

At the end of the first year the baby's body began to adapt itself to its food; she grew more quickly and her face lost the

peaked look of half-fed things. But the long months of artificial feeding left a permanent weakness of the delicate digestive organs.

Her first impressions of life were gained under a more catholic outlook than her sister had known.

"I feel," said Susan, "that Phyllis needs my time and consideration more than Baby. Phyllis is beginning to grow up, and so long as one provides food and clothes for a baby that is really all they require." Her conscience was sometimes uneasy, but it was quickly soothed.

The people in the kitchen were kind to the baby; and lavished much erratic affection upon her, as one who, like themselves, was not given a fair share in the division of things.

"Don't they want it in the drorin'-room?" asked the nursemaid. "Well! we're 'appy enough out 'ere, ain't we Trix?" Harris's name in the kitchen was Trix. She pressed a tough piece of toast, soaked in butter, into the baby's fragile fingers.

"Be careful wot you give 'er," expostulated the motherly but ignorant Mrs. Cane.

"Toast can't 'urt 'er. . . ."

When Jane began to talk she was the occasion of much laughter round the kitchen table; but in the drawing-room she was silent, awed by its formal restraint, and the smart spotlessness of the sister who so soon tired of nursing or playing with her.

The nursemaid left when Jane was four; she had demanded higher wages. But debts were accumulating and the master of the house had begun to insist that economy must be practised.

Arrobus had started business for himself at that period in the late nineteenth century when buying land as a speculation was a great game. He had seen and seized its opportunities. It did not much matter where the property was situated so long as it could be bought cheap. If it skirted some newly developed watering-place it was perhaps the easier to boom. The land being bought—and there were many methods in the algebra of finance which allowed of this without what simple people might imagine was the necessity of cash—it was surveyed, and roughly staked out into skeleton roads, whose surface was indicated by a mixture of flints, chalk, crockery and old tins. Pegs divided the land into narrow plots.

Then the great confidence trick was played on the public. The first move was an advertisement in many colours, setting out the desirability of every man being his own landlord, and possessing his own plot of earth in the beautiful land of his birth ; the one investment which could not disappear or deteriorate, but which would provide a resting place for his declining years ; where, with the sea breezes blowing over his home, the lark above his roof, and perennial flowers in his garden, his end would be one of unbroken peace.

In one corner of the advertisement would be set a picture of vivid green plots, divided by roads the colour of raw meat ; a tidy sea with a curled fringe of waves fronted them like a frill. In another corner was an announcement stating that full and free particulars would be sent to any applicant ; and a return ticket to the place would be issued at the price of half-a-crown, which included a free lunch, upon a date when the sale of the property would take place. If a purchase were made, money for the ticket would be refunded.

Here, indeed, was a chance for the sporting Briton to spend a day at the sea cheap ! He applied in his hundreds for tickets, and found himself in a train especially chartered for the purpose, running down to Flatlands near the Sea.

On arrival, his confidence wavered a little at the bleak barrenness of the land spread out before him, as he walked the one or two miles from the station to where a marquee had been erected for the lunch and sale. The sea was not in sight, but he was led to believe that the keen wind blowing was due to its proximity. He would sit down to lunch firmly persuaded that he had done a good thing in getting so cheap a day's holiday and food, but that he would certainly keep his money in his pockets, and leave it to others to invest in their native soil.

Determined and hungry he sat down to get his money's worth out of the meal. Cold ham, beef, pickles, and bread and cheese were plentiful. He began to like the smell of the air blowing through the opening of the tent. Beer and whisky were included in the free lunch ; laughter and jokes began to circulate.

The auctioneer now mounted the improvised rostrum and hoped they had enjoyed their lunch. He also hoped that they would make free of the drinks on the table, and the cigars which were being handed round.

It is difficult not to feel a man of money with a large cigar in your mouth, whisky at your elbow, and a man engaged in pointing out to you the best and safest investment for your surplus wealth.

Presently clerks gave out sale particulars; important looking things for a man to possess; printed on smooth white paper, with a plan of the estate. To sign was a simple matter, requiring but an absurdly small deposit, and entitling a man to speak of "My little bit of property." If several plots were bought the auctioneer assured his audience that if they ever wished to resell they would make a tidy little profit in a few years on land so excellently situated, and enjoying the advantages of country and sea. The land was free from tithe and land-tax, and conveyed without cost. Few purchasers were clear as to these terms, but to get anything free was good biz.

The majority of those who had set out as simple holiday-makers returned heated and important—the married ones anticipating with misgivings their wives' discovery of the investment—and carrying duly signed contracts in their pockets.

The proceeds on these sales to their manipulators was often as much as a hundred per cent.; not counting smaller windfalls from those who were unable to complete their purchases.

For ten years George Arrobus raked in profits greater than even his sanguine temper had anticipated. But his own ambition and Susan's extravagance kept him perpetually harassed, and his brain became less capable of the cool, swift judgment necessary for such transactions.

He made an unfortunate speculation when Jane was about four, being netted by the same methods which he had successfully employed himself; lunch and champagne in a fine London restaurant. His income did not cover half of his expenditure that year.

Susan refused to understand.

"You have a good brain. If it has been a bad year this year, it will be a good year next."

"But look at these figures!" He handed her a book in which he had set out plainly his liabilities. The monies due to him did not nearly cover them.

She held the book in her hands as though it burnt, making

no attempt to understand the figures set out. "I can't understand figures, I never could," she said querulously.

"But you can understand when I tell you I have only made four hundred pounds this year; and we are living at the rate of a thousand," he blustered.

"But why shouldn't you make more next year? We can't get up and walk out of this house. You must borrow, or—or do something."

He snatched the book from her hand and flung it on a table, adding words which Jane heard for the first time.

"I tell you, you can't get blood out of a stone."

It was a fearful saying. The child crept from the room and looked with a new horror upon the stones of the drive. Already its length provided her with an exploit requiring more courage than she sometimes possessed. She would set herself the task of walking all the way to the gate without allowing herself the comfort of a backward glance at the house.

Sometimes the small figure that took its erratic way between the rose trees failed to accomplish this heroic quest. Though the figure was frail, and wobbled uncertainly on its feet, it housed so vivid an imagination that it could not dare to face the creatures its fancy set upon the road beyond the gate. Dragons and giants lurked there, monstrous beyond the explanation of words.

When Jane's fears were too lively for this exploit, and the stones upon the drive glared with the possibility of that threat of getting blood from them, she turned aside into the wood which lay beyond the lawn to the right of the house. It was triangular in shape, its apex meeting upon the main road and the lane which debouched from it. She tip-toed as she opened the small gate set in the hedge which gave entrance to it. The green twilight was heavy with secrets, the trees were full of comfort, and from their secure depths came the fluttering and twittering of birds. Tiny flowers grew in the hollows, and there were sometimes fairies that only just let her catch the weeniest beginning of them, and then winked themselves away.

Jane laughed at this.

The garden was always enchanted however commonplace the house sometimes seemed, and it stretched a long way in front of the house and a long way behind. In the front it

was divided into two lawns by the carriage drive, either side of which stood the standard roses in their little round beds. They had straight bare stems surmounted by a great bunch of leaves, out of which bloomed roses heavy with scent. Perhaps winter came to the carriage drive, but Jane never remembered it afterwards.

Older people know many gardens, and reckon them up in the casual terms of experience, as being shady or sunny, or given up to flowers, fruit or vegetables ; but to a child a first garden is a garden of Eden, with miracles of creation each in its order, and a judge, sometimes in human form, sometimes shadowy and imagined, waiting on youthful sins with terrible severity. Here first blooms for us the Tree of Life, with its shining fruit of wonder ; it rises glorious, unlet by legendary or actual records of shame, a tree reaching up into the Paradise of God.

Jane learnt a number of strange things about the garden, where she spent long hours alone.

"She is very sensible and amuses herself," said Susan Arrobus.

"Yes, she doesn't seem much trouble," assented Arrobus. A sudden impulse of affection, with something of contrition in it, shot up in him, as he looked out on the lawn where a small figure wandered about. He wondered if there might be a few minutes to have a bit of a game with her, before he caught his train. A glance at his watch showed him this was impossible, but he hurried out of the house and went up to her.

"Let me see, it is your birthday soon ! Just think of the things you would like best, and tell me when I come home, and I'll see what the shops can do." He lifted her in his arms, gave her an emphatic kiss, and set her down again.

Jane waved a hand after him. She had heard the kitchen people say that he was "A very good sort, and real kind-hearted." She was sure they were right. The kitchen tea-table provided an astonishing harvest of impressions and information for the small listener who sat there insatiably absorbing them.

On this afternoon the talk was particularly enlivening, for Mr. and Mrs. Cane's married niece was there, grumbling about the short-comings of her husband. When she said good-bye, Trix was gloomy, and announced her intention of throwing over the milkman, with whom she had kept company for four years, if that was what marriage meant.

"Truth of the 'ole matter is, they spiled Maria," said Joseph. "They waited on 'er too much, and now she expects 'im to do the same, and it ain't likely he will."

"I don't know wot she's got to grumble about," said the easy-going Pollie. "Now she's got a mangle and the baby, wot more do she want?"

The logic of this appealed to the patient listener to the problems the table afforded.

"I should be werry happy with a mangle and a baby," she said.

The impulsive Trix dragged the child on to her lap. "Bless your soul, you are a rum little kid," she said.

Jane bore the onslaught meekly. She wished Trix wouldn't kiss her with a buttery mouth, but she liked the warm comfort of her strong arms.

Joseph and Pollie went out to feed the young chicks.

"Do you know what that little 'un sez to me this afternoon? She sez, 'Why do men laugh about going to church, Joseph? Shall I laugh when I grow up?' Hanged if I knew wot to answer her."

"She's left to herself too much, pore little soul."

"Yes, there ain't any workin' man wot I know as would be content with so little return for 'is cash as the guv'nor is. Works early and late he does, and don't seem to spend much on 'imself, and she takes it all, without turnin' a hair. And can't even look arter 'is children, which are 'ers. Wouldn't suit me."

"Pore little dear," murmured Pollie again.

Then Joseph made one of his profound remarks, with sufficient solemnity. "I often think that 'ere little kid do be like a bit o' life wot knows too much."

Presently Jane sidled through the yard gate, and looked round on the creatures who were happily all so different from each other, whereas the people in the kitchen were very much alike, and all talked loudly. There were long silences in the yard, which she sometimes made use of to tell the inhabitants amazing things. This evening, there was a black hen fussing among a newly hatched brood of chicks.

"I don't think," said Jane to her, "that I shall be allowed to have ten, all at once. I have never seen ten babies all together. P'raps it would be disconvenient. But if I may, I shall make them walk two by two." She turned aside at the

clang of the drive gates and ran to meet her father. He was hot and red, and carried his hat in his hand.

"Well, younker," he said.

"I think I will have a mangle."

"What on earth for?"

"For my birthday," she whispered. Birthdays were tremendous rites.

"Oh! all right." Again he mopped his head; and she felt sure he must have had another of those days when "You can't get blood out of a stone."

She followed him into the house, and watched while he poured out whisky from the square knobly bottle, and put water to it, and tossed it off with a long "Ah!" Then he looked at her with restless brown eyes, whose iris was surrounded by a net-work of thread-like red veins, and said in a half-jocular voice: "When you're older you must join the blue ribboners, you know—young abstainers, I think they call 'em. Safest thing to do." He stooped to pull off his boots. His face got redder still, and he was sharply and irritatingly aware of her eyes. But he tipped her face upwards with an affectionate moist palm as she brought his slippers. "Ah! You're an ugly duckling like me," he said. "But we both mean well, don't we? Where's your mother?"

"She hasn't come home yet."

"Oh! Well, you'd better take this decanter and hide it."

Jane looked at him; he seemed in earnest. She put the decanter behind the waste paper basket.

"That'll do, that'll do," he laughed noisily.

She stood in front of him bewildered.

"Come along, old sober face!" He took her hand in his fat warm grasp, and they went round the garden together.

She did not talk much, because he seemed so very tired. She supposed he must be getting old.

4.

By the time her next birthday came round she walked the carriage drive with little fear. Human beings had ceased to appear so extraordinarily alike, and had begun to interest her more than dragons and giants. Pollie had also told her that it was naughty to be frightened, because right up in the blue sky—which somebody else had told her never ended, which made things very difficult—was a loving God who watched

over her. As she had begun to read in books of people killed by wild animals, she was more comforted by a growing conviction that dragons and giants were only to be found in stories, and that wild animals are housed in the Zoo.

When she watched at the gate now it was to see the people pass. They were not ordinary people, as Jane could have told you. There was the butcher riding on a stout cob, in a blue overall, under which she could almost see the gleam of a knife, with which he could kill anything he had a mind to ; she wondered how he could whistle as he rode on. Then there was the baker, surrounded by cakes, like a man eternally invited out to tea. And the grocer, a daily Father Christmas, loading and unloading secret parcels. Sometimes the clergyman walked past, and waved to her : she was too afraid to wave back ; for did he not know the way to heaven, for which she had looked in vain up many a starry-aisled night ? And the doctor, also very mysterious, knowing of the beginning and the end of life ; from whence we come and where we go. So terrible did his knowledge appear that she marvelled to hear him laugh.

As the people in the house emerged out of the chattering chaos which had been her first impression of them, she surrounded each with some peculiar glamour. Trix, the least mysterious, had a young man, which was much more interesting than having a doll. Jane did not like dolls ; there was nothing to discover about them, and they were stupid with a stupidity not to be measured. She never took one to bed. She once took a dead bird, in the hope that it wasn't quite dead ; but Trix said she was nasty, and her mother called her a funny child ; so she did not take anything to bed again.

The sense of solitariness spread deep into her consciousness. It was not enlivened by invitations out to tea. Perhaps it was because she had learnt so well the habit of listening that she found nothing to say to the strange little beings who whispered and giggled together. She knew that they also looked upon her as a funny child, and she thought their games silly, and told them so. When her mother invited them back, she wept.

At six she may have been said, like Scott's Pet Marjorie, to have lost her reputation. She never really regained it ; which is a damaging statement, unless one knows enough history to recall the lives of the saints.

5.

"Child of the lonely heart . . .
The great world through the windows
sadly, questioningly, exploring."

Ed. Carpenter.

Giants and dragons having been relegated to picture books and fairy tales, other fears and horrors, less tangible and often having no form, took their place in Jane's recognitions. A thinking childhood which is lonely holds more of trouble than of joy. The mysteries of nature press harshly on the waking consciousness, if there are no open arms ready to hide the startled eyes, and bring security to the beating heart. Then occur the scars of wounds too deep for future healing.

Nobody in the house knew, save Jane, how silent the night was, or how profound its darkness. They laughed and sang, and went to sleep; while she often lay awake, staring and beaten by the haunting whispers that waited upon it.

They emerged from muffled distances that were endless; they moaned almost inaudibly within the room, but sometimes became a distinct wailing without. When she was altogether beaten by the oppression of them she cried out, and Pollie came bustling into the room.

"Lor! child, 'ave you had a bad dream? No? Then it was that cake at tea; I thought it was a bit heavy."

Though everything she said was quite wrong, Jane clung to her for comfort.

"Don't you hear, Pollie?"

"What, child? That banging? That's Trix putting down the irons on the stove."

Between laughing and crying Jane said, "You don't know anything, Pollie."

"Well, p'raps it's better than knowing too much."

In spite of her fears Jane said, "I want to know everything—everything."

Sometimes she was happy of nights when stars twinkled from out a sky very far away, and when odd little faces winked out from behind the poplar leaves which shook against the window.

"I did see them," she thought, with something between fear and joy.

It was the coming of a full moon which brought her a night of terror. She waked very hot on a September night to find

a shaft of white light across the room. She stared at it and wondered if she were really awake ; and then, sitting up, wondered if the gates of heaven were open. Curiosity overcoming fear, she slipped from the bed, and her feet, small and transparent, crossed the luminous bar. She moved to the window and pushed the blind aside. The sky was empty, there seemed to be no stars ; but above the pines of the copse a great white world floated, and drenched the garden with a fearful and solemn light. She shuddered. The blind dropped from her hand and jerked back upon the window. She sank down on her knees.

" Please God, I am very frightened," she prayed.

And she waited, as though petrified by that scorching light, for an answer. But no answer came.

" I hope God that you are not another fairy tale," she urged. Still there was no reply. With shut eyes, she groped her way back to the bed, and pulled the clothes over her face.

Once again the suspicion seized her that grown-up people were playing a game of make-believe where God was concerned. It was a long time before she fell into an exhausted sleep . . .

" I wonder if the moon will be as lovely again to-night," said her mother at the breakfast table.

Susan's face was pink, and smooth, and smiling after an undisturbed night of rest.

Jane's face was pale, and pinched by hours of fright ; her round dark eyes lifted with painful absorption upon her mother. Could she mean the white world which stood above the pines ?

She followed her out into the garden afterwards.

" Will you put me to bed to-night, and tell me ? " she asked.

" Tell you what ? "

" About the moon."

" Yes, I'll tell you about the moon, some day, though I don't know much about it. I can't put you to bed to-night ; you see your bedtime is at such an awkward hour."

Susan stooped and kissed the upturned face. She had seen more of Jane since Phyllis had been sent to a fashionable boarding-school.

" Why doesn't God answer my prayers ? " asked Jane hurriedly. Her mother always seemed too busy to talk to her for any length of time. " Why not ? "

" I—you are not old enough to understand."

" Does He answer yours ? "

A faint colour overran Susan's face. " You are too young to understand, Jane. Now run and tell Joseph to cut plenty of roses, and you can hold the tray for them. This afternoon Pollie shall take you for a walk."

" Need we go to the cemetery ? "

" Good gracious, no, child ! "

" Pollie likes that walk best. But I don't think they ought to put stones on people when they will have to get up one day. Or is the getting up a fairy tale ? " she added sharply.

" What are you thinking of, Jane ? Why should it be a fairy tale ? Doesn't Pollie read to you about it in the Bible on Sunday ? "

" She doesn't know the answers."

A silvery laugh rang out above her. " Oh ! you funny little girl. Now run along."

Jane walked off slowly, wondering as she went if heaven like churches was only open once a week. In the beautiful indifferent life of the garden, she moved as though already overborne by the mysterious burden of the life which is human.

To comfort herself that night, she conjured a dream-mother from out the spaces of the night. She sat on Jane's bed as long as she kept her eyes shut ; and she resembled her own mother, only she had stars for eyes.

On Sunday, the child, uncompromising and solemn, questioned Mrs. Cane. The vast ignorance of mankind is often more tragic than humorous for children. She had not troubled as to how much truth there was in Cinderella ; but, if God was not true—then what about the gates of Heaven ? Who made the stars ? What was above the world ? A worse loneliness than any she had known had her in its grip.

" Is the Bible more true than Cinderella ? "

" Really, Miss Jane ! I 'ave told you many times as Cinderella is a fairy tale."

" Aren't fairy tales ever true ? "

Pollie hesitated. " I don't know of any that is."

Jane stared at her. Considering how old grown-up people were, they knew very little. She listened with no conviction to the story of Daniel in the lions' den, and insisted on applying the story personally.

"Would you go in a lions' den and feel quite safe if you prayed?"

Mrs. Cane squirmed, and wished that the glib-tongued Harris were in her place.

"Would you?" the tormentor persisted.

"I am not a good man like Daniel," prevaricated the harassed woman with dignity.

"That's a werry great pity then; becos now I don't know if it is true or not."

Mrs. Cane decided that she must tell her mistress that Miss Jane ought to have a governess.

Mrs. Cane had been instructed in girlhood in the secret of making that pastry which was one of her proudest accomplishments; had been warned how light must be one's handling of it if its completion is to satisfy the highest achievement of which, flour, water and butter are capable; but neither she nor her mistress had received any enlightenment concerning the fashioning of that fine material which is the groping consciousness of a child.

On her insistence that "Miss Jane really oughter have a proper governess," a young girl was engaged for the mornings. She was breezy, healthy, and unimaginative; and soon shared Mrs. Arrobus' belief that her charge was a funny child. Jane discovered early that it was no use asking her "interesting" questions, and she accomplished the allotted tasks with such increasing ease that the governess, who had taken the post to increase her dress allowance, and had no idea of any strenuous work connected with it, found the task of keeping even with her pupil's progress somewhat of a nuisance.

Jane bore the increasing burden of her restless intelligence alone.

At this time she was wrestling, with a child's painful literality, with that odd piece of raw knowledge which had been passed to her, that the sky went on and on for ever, and also time. She agonised with the incomprehensibility of this, and the realisation that, with all her trying, she could not *feel* the forever of things.

"I don't want to think any more of the last piece of blue, and the last hour which isn't the last, because it hurts," she pleaded to her refractory mind; and opened her aching eyes to the darkness. Besides, if the blue went on and on for ever, then where were the Gates of Heaven?

There was none near to tell how close they may be to the thoughts of a child. Even the Dream-mother became more difficult of belief as the months passed by ; though perhaps it was due to her that the terrible Ones of the Shadows never lifted their awful eyes.

6.

" Forlornly, silently,
Plays in the evening garden,
Myself with me."

Walter de la Mare.

Truth, waiting upon the starry recognition of childhood, became increasingly obscure to Jane under the amazing ignorances and evasions of her elders ; and books did not help much. As her vocabulary increased she exploited those about the house, throwing unsatisfactory ones aside after the briefest of glances, and keeping by her bed such dissimilar companions as " Peter Parley's Annual," " A Midsummer Night's Dream," " Sandford and Merton," " A Child's History of Astronomy." More and more she addressed her bewildering questions to her inner Self, and to the solitudes of nature. Romance took the place of the Dream-mother : a fairy-land, half real, half conjured, from which she emerged a stranger to the conventional routine of the days.

Across these preoccupations flashed the visits of Phyllis in the holidays. A Phyllis as beautiful as Cinderella ; only happily in no sense, or under any imaginative effort, ever possibly a drudge. Jane's eyes absorbed her beauty ; the shining of the gold engulfing wave of her hair, hanging to the curve of her small waist ; her dainty ribbons, dresses and slippers. She wept when the day came for her to return again to school. Phyllis never wept ; she left amid a flutter of presents, new dresses and farewells, with a complacent and shining smile.

Jane returned to the long hours of her own days. So long were they that she used to sit up in bed before breakfast arranging what she would do with them, as older people map out their short years. The hours of learning she airily dismissed, there were so many others with which to be spend-thrift. Most afternoons she spent in the copse, which was

clamorous with birds, and full of little shadows of things that never were.

Sometimes she danced in here; a dance not taught in classes; a rhythmic slow movement that timed its steps by the swaying of the leaves, and that bowed to the bowing flowers. Sometimes she smiled at the unseen things, as the light smiled on the silence.

If Pollie forgot to call her to come in, she would sit in the twilight, drawing light breaths, and listening for the night wind, which was quite different to the playing wind of the day. Its suspirations were fraught with doom, as it accompanied the large cold moon afloat in a sea of darkness.

The moment came when her ears could bear no longer the burden of listening, nor her eyes the things that waited upon them. She passed stumbling from out the wood; a creature more inscrutable than anything the evening garden could show. Upon her face a shadow rested, as of some prescience of knowledge gained too soon; some intolerable guess of truth. She stood arrested on the mist-veiled lawn as though listening for some sound beyond the actuality of hearing.

There came a flood of light from an open door upon the ghostly stretch of the garden. A voice called from it: "Are you there, Miss Jane?"

The elfin figure flew over the lawn to where Pollie's homely face showed as beautiful with comfort as the Dream-mother's. But the look of the house behind Pollie was even more strange than the mists.

"Lor, child! Wot are you looking at? What's the matter?"

Jane's eyes narrowed again to the comfort of Pollie's face; it was red and warm-looking.

"Don't hug me too tight, Pollie."

"Why! wot 'ave you got, child?"

She opened her hands, within which on some dried moss stirred a naked bird, the late off-spring from a tree-sparrow's nest.

She glanced back once more upon the garden; it appeared to be holding its breath. Was it, too, afraid of the secrets of the night?

"What does it mean?" she whispered.

"Mean? Wot? This sparrer? I don't suppose it means anything, unless it's wantin' to eat."

She spent the evening endeavouring to make it feed off a match. There were visitors in the drawing-room, and her part was "not to be a nuisance." She went in to say good-night to them, though she did not intend to go to bed because of the bird. They were all laughing. Her mother was wearing a beautiful dress, and her father's face was redder than ever.

"Are they werry happy?" she asked Pollie as she went back to her corner in the kitchen, which was full of piled up dishes, out of which the two servants were bolting a meal from the varied leavings.

Harris winked at Mrs. Cane, who sighed and shook her head, and told Jane she might eat some of the sponge pudding.

Jane was too busy with the bird. But she heard the comments of the two women; they ran like sharp points of light through her own groping apprehension of things.

"Not that any of her dresses seem to do her much good," said Trix. "Or make her more contented like."

"What *would* do her good?" asked Jane.

Pollie said, "Be quiet, Trix."

Trix nevertheless answered "To see more of you, my dear, for one thing." Then turning to Pollie as with the real reason murmured, "If only she *loved* him." Her speech was rich in emphasis; she was shortly to be married to the milkman.

"Ah, yes!" sighed Pollie.

Jane pondered. "Him?" she asked. "Papa or God?"

"Child!" ejaculated Pollie, "Of course not God."

"No, I thought He didn't matter so much," said Jane.

At which the two women laughed, and then declared they were shocked.

The bird died; and Jane was taken to Pollie's lap for comfort. Half-dozing there she added to her general knowledge when Joseph joined the women round the fire.

"I suppose they'll go on 'aving these kick-ups; 'owever tight things may be," he remarked gloomily.

"It's her," said Harris, "I 'eard her tell him, 'e must find the money; and she couldn't understan' why there wasn't more."

"That's the way o' wimmen. They won't listen. One day there'll be a smash. Then wot's a pink and wite thing like 'er goin' to do? Fall to pieces like a rose wot's got the canker."

"He seems to me to be drinkin' more."

"An' who's going to blame him, if she won't listen to wot he sez? I should meself."

"*Must* she have more money?" asked Jane, rousing herself.

"Now you come on up to bed at once, Miss Jane. I thought you was asleep."

"I don't want to go to bed. What have you done with my dead bird?"

Mrs. Cane winked at her husband. "I give it Joe to bury under a nice rose-bush, so don't you bother no more about that."

"I don't think he must get more money if it makes him devilish tired," said Jane; the burden of the dead bird and her tired father in the words.

"Wot are you a-talkin' of, Miss Jane, using such words?"

"They're true," she declared. "Because that's what he said 'Devilish tired.'"

Trix caught her off Pollie's lap, and walked softly up the stairs with her, so that no one might hear how late she was.

"Now you git inter bed at once, Miss, or I'll be calling you a bony-nosed rabbit again."

Jane felt her nose with scared fingers. "It's a horrid name," she said petulantly.

"Well, 'pon my soul, you're a funny little thing! Good-night."

The door shut discreetly. Jane stared at it with anger. Why weren't other people called funny? Anyway, she thought with vicious intensity, they all seemed very funny, and very stupid to her. She tore off her clothes and, being too angry to think, dropped off to sleep.

7.

She was promoted now to have her breakfast and mid-day meal with her parents. They were sometimes embarrassing occasions, during which she learnt something of the looming power of that ogre of money, to which was due the gusts of irritable arguments and intolerable silences when she was afraid to raise her eyes. It was want of more of it which made her pretty mother unhappy, and the getting of it which

brought her father home devilish tired, and sent him to the yellow stuff in the square-shouldered bottle with the knobs on it.

In the intricate tangle presented to her, money appeared as the preponderant and destructive power.

She listened and listened, building up her place of life : so dwarfed and obscured and narrowed from the first, with little of the glow of childhood upon it ; and chilled with a sense of struggle and doom, and things wrought to no purpose . . .

" When Trix marries the milkman, I could dust and make the beds ; and I shouldn't want any money for it," she said to Mrs. Cane. These were not questions you could discuss except in the kitchen.

" But you'll have to be going to a proper school, and then you'll have lessons all day."

" What for ? "

" What for ? Well, I suppose to make you into a young lady."

" I like dusting and drying the plates," said Jane, who had been complimented on her accomplishment of these tasks by Mrs. Cane and Harris.

" You'll make a better wife than Miss Phyllis will, won't she, Pollie ? " said Harris.

" That she will, bless 'er ! " Jane was caught up on a wave of affection. Released, she smoothed her dress down, and was preparing for further argument when the dining-room bell rang, and she heard her mother's voice crying out in the hall.

So strange was the sound of it that they all ran out of the kitchen together. There stood her mother calling out, " Mrs. Cane, Mrs. Cane ! Go in the dining-room and look ! Your master—— No, no Jane ! You mustn't. Stay here with me."

Jane put her arms round her mother. She had a sudden sense of being on a stage and really doing something, instead of only looking on. She stood stiffly erect. The hall was full of intensest whispers of things very real.

Then the dining-room door was opened and Pollie came out. Her face was pale ; she spoke in a hurried whisper.

" He's breathing all right, m'm. I think it's some sort of a fit. I'll get Joseph to help me with him up to bed ; and then he'll go for the doctor."

"I think I'm going to faint," said Susan Arrobus.

Jane looked sharply at Pollie.

"Get the missis into the drorin'-room, Harris, while I find Joseph," said Mrs. Cane.

"It would be rather a nuisance if you did faint," said Jane, softly but firmly.

Her mother leant on her heavily. Jane moved forward proudly. Harris was very little use, she seemed afraid to touch her mistress, and, having seen her on the sofa, stood by scared and awkward.

"Oh! Jane, he is very ill," sobbed her mother.

"He will be better soon," said Jane stoutly, kneeling by the side of the sofa. "Would you like some eau-de-cologne?"

"Yes—but don't leave me. Harris will get it."

Harris hurried off, relieved. Jane administered eau-de-cologne and kisses until Pollie returned to say her master was in bed.

"I think I'd best stay with him till the Doctor comes. Becos if you was upset it might be bad for 'im."

"Oh! Mrs. Cane, you don't think—he will die."

"We can't be thinking anything, m'm, until the doctor has seen him."

Jane encircled her mother again with thin protecting arms.

"I must go up and see him," Susan Arrobus insisted; and they supported her up the stairs.

In the room, into which Jane was not allowed to go, Mrs. Arrobus was again overtaken by faintness.

"You'd best go down, m'm, and leave him to me."

Again Jane received her shaking and tearful mother; again she knelt by the sofa while a strange two hours passed; in which there was a constant hurrying of muffled footsteps and the sound of strange voices. At the end of it, a nurse watched beside the bedside of George Arrobus, and the doctor had decided to stay at the house for the night. He came into the drawing-room, quiet, grey and preoccupied.

"When is this little girl going to bed?" he asked.

Jane squeezed her mother's hand hard.

"I must keep her with me. I can make her up a bed here."

Jane looked up at the doctor. The doctor looked down and met a pair of eyes of extraordinary intensity. They affected him with a sudden depression, as though they had

asked of him insurgent questions to which he could give no assuring replies. He patted her head and looked round the room abstractedly, and said : " The nurse is a reliable woman. I shall be glad to get an hour or two of rest. I'll go up to my room. You need not be afraid that she will not let me know if I am required."

" Doctor ! Is he——is he——"

" He is seriously ill, Mrs. Arrobus. For that reason alone, you must keep calm."

He went out. Jane wiped her mother's eyes and told her she must not cry.

" Talk to me, talk to me, child."

Jane had been so inculcated with the necessity of being seen, and that not much, and heard still less, that she felt very uncomfortable ; her tongue seemed to forget any sense of words. She clenched her hands and pressed her lips together, and, with an immense effort, began the story of Daniel and the lions' den. " I shall think of a better one presently, p'raps," she apologised. Having started, things became easier, and she poured out an unending medley of stories and inventions. The manner of delivery was emphatic, with frequent long Thens——necessary for further construction. Once her mother laughed in spite of everything.

Soon after, in the early hours of the morning, they both fell asleep on the sofa.

Jane was never quite sure afterwards who woke them, or how she first knew that her father was dead. Somehow, she felt no surprise. It seemed the natural end to that amazing night, in which she had appeared older than her mother, and where everything was upside down, and yet more real than ever before. A blinding sense of sight was upon her, in which death was more true than anything she had been told of or had discovered. No one attempted to explain it ; it was true with the inexorable truth of silence.

Though the blinds were drawn, and all the rooms in darkness, people moved and spoke in them so that she seemed to see them as she had never seen them before. They were all kind and spoke to each other softly. Strangest of all things her mother constantly called for her, and did not want anyone else near her.

" Go and fetch my tea, Jane. I don't want the servants in here. Tell them to order what is wanted . . . Ah ! yes,

you have brought a duster—that is right. Though I expect we shall have to sell all the things. Perhaps we shall be very poor, and I don't know how to work."

"Phyllis and I will work."

"You do not cry, Jane. You loved your poor father?"

Jane left off dusting. She had built up, from the chaotic material at her disposal, a vision of death which opened on to the gate beyond the farthest piece of blue. And she thought of her father now—as she always remembered him hereafter—a perpetually tired man with a very hot face. Now that death had proved ascertainably true, she saw a security of rest for him beyond those far unimaginable gates.

"He will not be tired any more, I expect," she said; in the hesitating voice which groped among her thoughts. "He was *always* very tired." She had nearly said devilish.

"Jane!" cried her mother.

Then the door opened, and a girl was shown in who carried a large box, and was so neat and smart, with such high heels to her shoes, and a hat so extraordinary, that Jane forgot again how rude it is to stare.

"Good-morning. You have brought the things," said her mother faintly.

"Yes, madam."

The box was undone; out of it came the blackest dresses Jane had seen.

Her mother and she tried them on; there was one, too, for Phyllis.

"Why do they have to be so black and ugly?" asked Jane of Pollie.

"Because your poor father is dead."

Mrs. Cane turned to the kitchen door where a tradesman stood. "A sort of fit," she explained to him. "And he never said an unkind word to either Joseph or meself in the eight years we've bin 'ere."

She and Harris resumed their seats by the fire.

"I can't work," she said, "and there's no good pretending I can."

"I can do things," said Jane.

"All right, child. You can wash those tea-things up. 'Pon my word, she really likes working." Mrs. Cane gave herself up again to a luxury of regret for her dead master,

which made work, or any sense of hurrying-up, seem like an indecency.

"It'll feel different, o' course, wen we gits the blinds up again," said Harris.

"Why mustn't we have light?" asked Jane.

"I never see such a child as you are for asking questions. You can't have light becos it ain't proper to 'ave light with your pore father laying up there."

Jane put the frustrated energy of her thoughts into a vigorous brushing round of the sink.

In the evening Phyllis came; Jane could hear her crying with her mother. She stood for a moment clenching her fists before a sense of overwhelming confusion. "I must not cry—there won't be nobody left to do things, if I do," she thought. With dark-rimmed eyes and tight-shut mouth she walked to the front door, upon which someone had knocked.

She opened it, and a man looked down on her. He was large and rather fat, and different from anyone she had seen. He looked as if no one had told him how to do his hair, or what clothes to wear, or that he ought to speak softly in a house of drawn blinds. He said, in quite a jolly kind of voice: "Hullo! Who are you?"

"I am Jane. But you must not speak loud."

He lowered his voice, but his eyes had an extraordinary twinkle in them. "I am Uncle Jim. Do you mind letting me come in?"

Jane let him in.

"Where is your mother?"

"I will go and find her."

James Gallup looked after the figure climbing the stairs. He was reminded of Tenniel's drawings of "Alice in Wonderland." He had not been in his sister's house since the child now climbing the stairs was a baby. He had never been able to make head or tail of Susan; and was dreading the present encounter. He reckoned that Jane might be the saving straw to clutch at; she appeared calm and very much herself. In this first moment of approach he had time to be surprised at that. He had always felt that his sister, above all else, was a destroyer of identity.

"Will you come upstairs? You had better take your coat off." Jane had returned.

He obeyed and followed her. She stopped on the half-landing and looked at him. "They are both crying."

"Who?"

"Mother and Phyllis."

"Let me see, Phyllis is your sister?"

"Yes."

"Then it is very certain—er Jane—that we must not cry."

"No," she said with immense decision; and led the way on again.

He had not felt so much gratitude towards a female for years . . .

The next day was full of light; it danced on Jane's blinds until she thought, "It can't know anything about people being dead." She looked at her black dress hanging stiffly over a chair-back, and felt that somehow the dress was wrong and the light was right.

She got up and ran to her mother's room, and was taken into bed. Snuggling in those lovely arms she wondered very hard how she could earn money so that her beautiful mother might have the things she wanted. She could only think of little girls in pantomimes earning money. Anyway she would ask Uncle Jim.

Then the day began in earnest. They had breakfast, at which Phyllis poured out tea. She looked just as pretty, even in her black clothes.

"You do look a sight in your dress," she said to Jane.

Jane liked pretty dresses, but she was not thinking of them to-day. "You look nice in yours," she said absently.

The fat man, her uncle, shot her a glance from above his coffee-cup. He judged her answer unfeminine in its quiet generosity. "She certainly has an extraordinary face," he thought; and felt pity for so sincere a creature arriving upon an age sceptical of all things, and doubting, like himself, the possibility of human sincerity.

He looked from her face to the wedge of light pouring through the drawn curtains and hoped there would not be a long funeral address under the broiling sun.

Everything appeared suspended in the house. Mrs. Cane and Harris hung about in their new black dresses, wiping their eyes; and Joseph fidgeted uneasily, cursing time, and women, and funerals, and the way his gravel drive was being cut up. Only Jane darted about the house; carrying

messages and trays to her mother, and needles and cottons to Phyllis. She could hear the strong masculine voice of Uncle Jim directing strange men who came to the house.

Then there was silence. The carriages had driven away ; her mother and Phyllis were together, and the servants in the kitchen.

Jane went up the staircase into the room from which they had taken her father. There was an empty space by the bed where the coffin had stood, and a heavy scent of flowers which seemed to make breathing an effort.

She stood very still, while wild and confused thoughts raced through her brain. Thoughts of death and life, which had nothing to do with all that had happened in the house. With them went the figure of Uncle Jim, who had not been afraid to smile, or to knock his pipe quite loudly under the mantel-piece.

Where was her father ? She had forgotten exactly how he looked . . . She had not said good-bye to him . . . Her head turned to look round the room ; her body felt very stiff. The scent grew thicker in her nose, and mouth, and upon her eyes.

As she moved from the room a voice pursued her : " You can't get blood out of a stone."

PART II

CONCERNING THINGS JANE TRIES TO DISCOVER

“ He lived at last in a garden in the suburbs, wholly betaking himself to his studies, and a private life, saving that sometimes he would walk down to the haven, and laugh heartily at such variety of ridiculous objects which there he saw. Such a one was Democritus.”

Burton.

1.

JAMES GALLOP sat in his library endeavouring to concentrate his attention upon notes he was making on certain Russian authors, destined at a later date to emerge from obscurity into the unwinking sun of British approbation. At which future time these same notes wore a somewhat shabby aspect of consideration, hardly to be tolerated by a nation unused to fine distinctions between the extremes of indifference and panegyric.

Gallup had commenced the systematic and indexed taking of notes some years before, when, on the taking of a profane vow, he had savagely commented that time so spent was less wasted than that spent upon women. He called them the Sex, being a Victorian; though intolerant of the age, as a man may be intolerant of his own family. The notes helped to preserve a memory which had always served him with alacrity; and to deepen an ironical outlook towards his complacently ignorant neighbours.

The library was a big room in an ugly house, in a suburb described by agents as delightful and conveniently distanced from London. Five years earlier two large estates had dominated the district, one belonging to a nobleman and the other to a provision dealer. These estates had been purchased by a land company and converted into rows of houses, standing in their own gardens, with rents ranging from fifty to two hundred pounds a year according to accommodation. They proved a profitable investment for the land company; and if they bore evidence of cheap labour and cheap ideas, they yet appeared pleasing and home-like contrasted with the mid-Victorian barrack-dwellings of the older parts of the neighbourhood.

Gallup's house belonged to the barrack period; and was typical of that nightmare of building in which respectability and puritanism had chosen to house themselves. It was

dismal and solid, with narrow windows, divided by heavy stone mullions, and a roof of steely grey slate. He had chosen it because it was at the end of a cul-de-sac, and free from frequent strolling intrusions.

He pushed his fingers irritably through the stiff small curls that stood back from a commanding forehead as though loth to encroach upon the dignity of that bared space evolved by a thinking animal; then got up with a spluttering movement and went to the bell which hung by the grate. The bell-handle was old-fashioned and could be attacked with satisfaction. He pulled it violently.

A tall good-looking woman came at the summons, and looked at him with a tolerant and affectionate smile.

"Take this ink out and strain it," he said thunderously. "If any hair nostrum could accumulate hair with the rapidity with which ink does, the solution of baldness would be accomplished. You'd better make a note of the idea—an ink restorer for hair. No woman knows, when she's dependant on a man for her bread, how soon she may find herself stranded."

Her smile became more tolerant at the vindictiveness of his voice.

"You're still bent on this business of marriage?" he snapped.

"Yes, please, sir."

"I don't please. And damme, if I see what better off you think you're going to be with him than with me!"

"No, sir."

The flicker of a smile moved his deep-set eyes, in which malignancy and humanity battled, at the meekness of her voice. "Your husband can thank me for teaching you obedience."

The door closed on her. His irascible glance fell on the sprawling writing of an open letter. One damn thing after another. Following on this desertion of his housekeeper, to whom he had imparted the art of cooking, as well as of obedience, his sister had decided to come and live in the neighbourhood. There was her letter saying she would come and take his advice about the move this afternoon. As if a woman had ever taken advice from anyone since the world began.

He started in his chair. What he deemed a hysterical knock sounded upon the front door.

A woman in widow's dress floated in, and turning back a deep veil offered him a fair unwrinkled cheek.

Gallup had bound himself, by the aforesaid profane vow, to abstain from kissing all women. With the end of his nose, which was notable, he brushed her face.

Then he saw Jane.

"Ah! that's good," he said, "my friend Jane. Shall we rechristen you Sancta Simplicitas?"

"What for?"

"A very direct question. You shall have a direct answer: For the sake of truth."

Susan Arrobus fluttered into a chair with a sigh.

"As you know, James, there is only four hundred a year."

He squirmed. He knew that his late brother-in-law, for all his weakness, had yet preserved sufficient courage, in face of her dripping taunts, to secure that four hundred pounds annuity of which she spoke.

"And both the children are girls. I feel I shall be glad to live near someone I can come to—to talk things over."

She paused, fingering the edge of the floating veil of her widowhood. James was unresponsive. Her large pale eyes filled with tears as she remembered the husband whose tenderness had never failed before such appeals. She knew nothing of the registration of the vow which had perhaps influenced his cursory salute, neither was she likely to reflect that the bond of any vow entails unjustifiable restrictions. Susan never reflected; her mind moved kinetoscopically, presenting life as a series of moving pictures, herself the insatiable heroine.

"If only Jane had been a boy," she murmured.

"She seems sensible enough for one."

"She has had very little education."

"That's good!" he exclaimed, with the blustering cheerfulness with which he opposed her sentimentality. "Always beware of schoolmasters, doctors and priests. They have to assume a fictitious omnipotence which is good for no man; and mostly the omnipotence ceases to become fictitious to the man himself. The world is sufficiently supplied with false gods."

Susan's eyelids drooped lower over her eyes; they were

heavy eyelids bordered with long fair lashes. There seemed to be no avenue to any sympathy from her brother. Then she looked at Jane swinging her legs up and down on an uncomfortably high chair.

"Don't fidget, Jane. You used to sit much quieter when you were smaller."

Jane removed her unwinking gaze from her uncle's to her mother's face. She said slowly: "You see, I didn't know then that you needn't be so good as I thought you had to be."

Gallup gave a short laugh. Good Lord! the child had summed up the whole history of the contagion of the world's slow stain.

"You'll sometimes also discover, Jane, that you acquire more useful knowledge from being naughty than from being good."

"Really, James! It is a good thing she can't understand you."

"Don't bother yourself. Her ideas of goodness and naughtiness are less warped than ours. Have you looked over any houses here yet?"

Susan had. She produced slips of paper which appeared to represent unnumbered inconveniences.

He managed to reduce the houses which might be possible to three. Then they had tea.

It was brought in with imperturbability by the deserting housekeeper, under Gallup's sustained glare.

"Giving up a good home—and I should have left her provided for—to marry some noodle; and never possess a penny she can call her own."

"Ah! that's your way of looking at marriage, James," said his sister tremulously. George Arrobus was fast becoming a saint in his wife's memory, and their married life an idyll of happiness.

"Need people get married?" asked Jane. She felt something of the freedom of the kitchen atmosphere about Uncle Jim.

"I've never discovered any very good reason why, Jane. You'll probably find out how badly it works yourself some day."

"Your Uncle is in fun. People must get married, but it isn't a question for little girls."

"Is there a book with questions in for little girls?" asked Jane, looking round the shelves.

"Ah, no, Jane, no! But since you suggest it, I'll write one," said her uncle. "There is a Little Arthur's Guide to Knowledge. I will write you Little Jane's Guide to Morality. No one will buy it but you, Jane. I foresee that."

He ruffled his curls and emitted a series of extraordinary grunts and ahs. Jane thought him the funniest creature she had seen. But she loved him fearfully and deeply.

"Joseph and Pollie would come and do your work," she said. "If they don't come perhaps they will go into the workhouse. I heard them say so."

Susan laughed her little constrained laugh. "You've been too much in the kitchen, child. They will find no difficulty in getting another place. And they were not altogether satisfactory. Joseph had no idea——" She launched out into a history of deficiencies, to which the child seemed to listen with something of the inattentive acquiescence of the man.

He was struck again, as he had been at first, by a kind of detachment about her, a sort of wandering loneliness; she came near one as though half expecting a rebuff.

Meanwhile Jane was trying to imagine what extreme horrors workhouses must harbour, to account for the dismal forebodings of Joseph and Pollie.

"Now tell me what you think of your friends in the kitchen, Jane. You appear to have studied them at first hand."

She sat up very stiff; her face reddened. She was bent on rescuing her friends from that horror of the workhouse.

"They are not as fat as you," she said gently to Gallup. "Pollie is a *werry* good cook. Joseph said when a man is fifty that is all he wants of a woman." Jane remembered this exactly because she had thought about it a good deal. "Perhaps you are fifty?" she added, not sure if this was a rude question.

They both laughed this time; and Uncle Jim took Joseph's address down, while her mother started again to tell him how impossible it was to get large furniture into small houses, and how sad it was that she had no son to settle these things for her.

"Phyllis must go on with her music and painting, we can't waste all her education. But I hope to manage with one

maid at The Cot, if I settle on that. Of course, I am used to doing a certain amount myself. We have had to be careful for so long. Poor George had some unlucky business lately, and we never had a nurse for Jane. It meant me putting her to bed——”

“Three times,” said Jane intensely; as one recalling too brief a happiness.

“You had better run in the garden if you can’t be quiet, Jane,” said her mother; who was unable to resist the charming pictures of herself constantly presented to her by a mind devitalised by emasculated morality, and religious services for respectable people.

Jane went out through the open French windows on to a lawn surrounded by a border of flowers.

“She appears temperamentally truthful,” commented James. It was certainly either a rare or a suppressed quality in women.

“She is a funny child,” said Susan, as tartly as her sweetness would allow.

Presently she took her leave, gracefully, and with the faint suggestion of regret which made it a social art. He remembered that in their youth she had never been troubled by the elementary process known as falling in love; but in her immaturity had achieved the difficult task of retiring without loss of composure from certain episodes occasioned by the crude emotional ideas of young men.

He rang the bell and took his revenge of the good-looking housekeeper.

“I have heard of an excellent man and his wife to take your place,” he said. “On what date is your marriage?”

She, being a woman and knowing his heart, forgave him.

2.

Mrs. Arrobus signed an agreement to rent The Cot on a seven years’ lease. It was, as its name implied, on a miniature scale: a human doll’s house, fashioned as to appearance of cream roughcast, green paint, and little windows. It was one of a pair, which pairs extended up the twisting length of what had been an old country lane, but was now foot-pathed

and curbed. There were gardens round the villas, like stage gardens, cut up exactly by privet hedges. At the back small larch trees waved ; the lane had wound through a larch copse. The trees, stiff of trunk and drooping of green, stood like sentinels with a death sentence at their heart ; for since so much brick had advanced on their roots some strange disease had seized them, so that before their small roses had hardened and the first glory of their green departed, a grey pallor overspread them : the shadow of their hastening dissolution. But in early spring nothing of this was visible ; and later in the year the low roofs of the villas rose from the matrix of green with an intimate effect of human nests.

Jane looked out of her Liliputian window, framed for a microcosm of a universe, and hardly grieved for the avenue of roses, and the large window which had left the moon so wide an entrance. Here she was quite near to the overhanging eaves in which the sparrows quarrelled. The stuff of their nests fell on her ledges, and she laughed at their absurd fussings and activities.

She was supposed to be running wild while the settling down in The Côt was being accomplished. But the running was entirely concerned with those errands which the stupidity of shopkeepers and a general servant made necessary. Jane became a competent shopper.

There was a small boy in the next garden who played solemnly at being admirals, policemen, engine-drivers and generals. He was even funnier than the sparrows, she thought. At no period of her life was she able to take dressing-up seriously ; not even official ones.

She and the boy stared at each other for many weeks through a thin place in the hedge. It was a wiser way of introduction than the handshake and smile of older people, which makes so flippant a thing of a new acquaintance as to deter him from friendship. They stared until they discovered a good many things about the other ; and then the boy, with a courage unusual in his sex (perhaps he had learned through the hedge something of Jane's rare reserves) called through the branches one day, " Are you all wight ? "

" Yes, thank you," breathed Jane. She knew nothing of boys ; but she knew of heroes and explorers and fairy princes. With the memory of their exploits in her eyes she peered at the little boy.

It was uncomfortable with your head poked half-way through the privet twigs. The boy seized his courage again : " Shall I come wound and play with you ? "

" Oh ! do," said she fervently.

He disappeared to ask permission ; and came in at the little gate. Jane looked upon him, breathing intensely.

" Will you please tell your muvver, my muvver would have come to see her, but she has been ill—months."

Having arrived at the end of this formality he looked up with wide blue eyes and a smile of much blandishment. Jane's mother had blue eyes, but their colour never changed, while the boy's eyes were like the sky on the warmest day : they melted and changed even as you looked, under lashes which were very much darker than his hair. They were extraordinarily persuasive ; and possessed an unjustifiable advantage all his life ; looking more than eyes can possibly mean, and discovering secrets deeper than any he knew.

Jane succumbed to them easily. Her face crumpled into adoring tenderness. " Darling," she said.

The boy did not respond in any way to the term ; he asked : " What is your name ? "

" Jane."

" It's an ugly name, isn't it ? "

" P'raps it is."

" My name is Anthony—Anthony Carmichael Wilson." At the exertion of this effort two creases dented his smooth skin between the eyes and the impudent nose beneath.

Jane nearly kissed him.

" You're not pretty, are you ? "

" No," said she shortly. Then added : " I think I'm ugly." She did not turn away her face, because of her absorbing interest in the truth of things.

He looked into her face. " You are not really ugly," he concluded lightly.

" Thank you," she said ; and led him by a narrow path to a grassy place under the larches.

Little airs moved the feathery sprays of the trees ; and among the blades of grass, if you laid flat down and listened, might be heard strange whisperings. Jane asked him to try. He said he heard nothing. She hunted about anxiously and found him something more tangible.

" You see ! The spider hides in that hole, and there is a

trap door at the top ; and when he has caught a fly he can take it and shut the door."

Anthony Carmichael Wilson was interested. It was like a pirate story. Jane's cheeks flushed ; she poured forth strange lore of botany, entomology and fable ; until Anthony forgot the glory of his long name, and that superior male attitude of which he had already acquired a sense from the relation between his father and mother. He sat confidently at Jane's knee and listened to his first nature lesson.

Presently he asked : " How long have you been to school ? "

" I've never bin. I had a governess. She only taught me about dead people."

" Oh ! "

" I've forgotten them. They died—ages—and ages—ago."

He looked down again fascinated at innumerable small things clambering about in the forest of the grass, and was afraid to move for fear he might unthrone a king, disturb a war, or crush a nursery.

" Shall we play ball ? " he asked. The grass on the lawn was short, and perhaps uninhabited.

She was so stupid at catching that he regained his sense of superiority. " How old are you ? " he demanded.

" Ten."

" I'm seven—but, you watch,—I can catch this ball quite easily in my left hand."

She watched. Unfortunately he missed first time. As he stooped to pick up the ball the hair at the back of his neck showed so light as to be almost silver, his neck fell in just where the hair waved thickest. Jane's eyes filled and darkened with maternal love. She prayed that he might not miss the ball again. Up it went—yes, he had caught it ! He turned on her triumphantly.

She watched him, impressed, until he was tired.

In the shade of the trees again, he asked : " Of course, you don't believe in fairies ? " At the back of his mind he was half hoping that she would disprove his scorn.

" I almost saw one once," she declared.

" Where ? "

" At the back of the shaking leaves in the middle of the night."

He appeared unconvinced. She sat herself on a stump of tree and embracing her thin knees gazed up at him with searching eyes.

" You see, you must believe in them," she said.

" W'y ? "

" I must."

" W'y ? "

" Becos it's the onliest way."

It was a feminine answer and not so satisfying to him.

3.

Anthony and Uncle Jim took the place in Jane's world that her father had held. A place widened and happier of experience, though encounters with both were infrequent, and to be looked upon as red-letter days. Days of awe and a suspended fearful joy where Uncle Jim was concerned, and of rare comfort when she consoled Anthony about his sums, or other small troubles he brought to her. She entered with him into a warmed and personal world, in which she had a living share, instead of feeling like somebody looking on at a game whose rules were not to be understood. With Anthony she slipped into a place which was her very own.

Sometimes she rocked him to and fro on her lap, until the warmth of his nearness sent a glow through her thin cold hands and feet. Sometimes she kissed him : never casually, but at first fearfully, and then, as the mood took her, at one time gently, and at another with a quick hungry gesture.

They sometimes had tea together on Sundays. Each found it the dullest day in the week. No one could understand the rules which governed it. In Jane's home one was allowed to use cards for building houses but must not play a card game with them ; like Beat your neighbour out of Doors. In Anthony's home you might play draughts, but must not bring out cards at all. No one knew the reasons for these rules.

Jane spent her eleventh birthday in bed with a cold, which prevented Anthony coming to tea ; but Uncle Jim appeared with a splendid book which Phyllis brought up to her.

She sent him down a twisted note : " Dear Uncle Jim, I *love* the book. I can't tell you in a letter. The pictures are *beautiful*. What colour is a griffin, I am painting one ? Please send answer. Jane."

" It is a pity your house is so large and ugly, James,"

Susan was saying. "I should have thought a house in this road would have suited you and been less expensive to run." She had never been able to satisfy her curiosity as to her brother's income.

"My dear Susan, I like space. We're suffocated enough!" He shot his feet out before him, and the tea in his cup slopped over into the saucer.

"Damn!" he muttered. His irritated clumsiness had been caused by the recognition that Susan always scored if he attempted to put his point of view before her. He was prejudged before starting; up against an invincible army of prejudices, with her injured womanhood as the final embargo.

She gave him a fresh supply of tea, with that droop of eyelids and faint repression of the lips, which led him savagely to wonder why George Arrobus had escaped committing murder. He fell back on the griffin as a safe subject.

"There was an article in *The Craftsman* on Greek bronzes—I must look it out for her—with illustrations of griffins. That child appears to have a touch of genius. I don't know where you picked her up."

On those occasions when a sprawling note had invited him to The Cot on business, he had mostly been aware of Jane as a flying vision with a flashing back glance of shyness on him. Sometimes his sister pushed her forward on his notice, and she would stand silent in front of him, her hands nervously twining their fingers. He would look on her with a certain shamefacedness, as upon some wild thing caught, netted; forced by something in her glance, her gestures, to acknowledge the pity of it; to anticipate, to hope for, an escape, somehow, somewhere, for her.

Susan would say, "Don't fidget, Jane." He noticed that when her mother was absent the child was free from fidgeting habits. However mute she might be he was conscious of something tense and fugitive about her; something, almost, of the anguish of genius, and in direct opposition to the conventional middle-class environment.

"Genius! I hope not," Susan said hastily.

"Why not? There is parental pride, isn't there?"

"I shouldn't feel at all proud. We all know how peculiar they are."

"Peculiar!" he shouted; and in incisive tones, which he

knew annoyed her as much as anything he could say, went on, "They are peculiar after the same manner as the bird was which a townsman saw in a country house, and remarked 'That's not my idea of a wood-cock!' and was reminded that nevertheless it was the Almighty's. Genius is not likely to be our idea of it. A genius has been defined as a person whom Nature sacrifices for the raising of the intellectual level of humanity; which would seem to suggest some grounds for pride, or at all events for sympathy." He put down the fragile cup heavily and tugged at his nose. It seemed impossible to escape sententiousness with Susan. Yet he went on: "People talk glibly about the peculiarities of genius; but what about the peculiarities of commonplace people? We only happen to be familiar with the latter."

"I can't argue, James; but at least I know something of their morals."

"Morals!" (Jane heard the word upstairs.) "The Japanese say that the Chinese invented morals because they were a race with none worth speaking of; which probably explains the Pharisee's insistence on them. 'Pon my soul, Susan, do you really believe, at your age, that evil only lies in crude crimes? Haven't you discovered that it is respectable people who crucify saints and make life intolerable, and choke human progress?"

He stopped as though he had shot down a physical break. Provoked as he was by the absurdity of argument, he was satisfied to see Susan more than a little ruffled.

"If you give me a sheet of paper, I'll write a line to Jane," he said. He determined to ask that small person to dine with him; when there would be no necessity to attempt to demonstrate the way of truth, she would quite sufficiently look it.

Susan, with dignified gestures, brought him paper and a writing pad. She guessed that he shewed this friendliness to Jane to annoy her; though why it should be thought to annoy her she did not stay to consider.

Gallup wrote: "Dear Jane. Your mother thinks your cold so bad that I had better not come up to see you. If you will come and have dinner with me next Thursday, I will tell you the history of the griffin. You had better come early, and have tea first with your friends Joseph and his wife. As a griffin is distantly and modernly connected with

a greenhorn, I should suggest green, with, possibly, red eyes. Bed is no doubt a fine place in which to paint. Uncle Jim."

He folded the note with a chuckle ; it was a new experience. His life had not encouraged the idea of himself in paternal relations.

"Come and say good-bye to Phyllis, she is in the garden," said Susan ; and they went out into the June twilight, where Phyllis sat on a garden seat in a froth of needlework. A black bow emphasised the shining of her hair.

"I am thankful Phyllis is a normal, womanly girl," said his sister with emphasis.

Gallup acknowledged his niece's presence by a wave of the hand, then answered Susan : "You should remember that where there is ignorance there is always panic ; which is the surety by which doctors earn their fees."

He went out aggressively through the small gate, and her face relaxed as she concluded that he was very much of a man. She sighed ; a recognition of the seeming necessity for the brutal and immoral in the sex.

Gallup descended to the wine-cellar of the house at the end of the cul-de-sac, and made careful choice of a bottle of wine. Then he went into dinner, in the large square dining-room with its long narrow windows, letting in so little of light, and its solid unnecessary furniture and pictures. Joseph waited on him nervously, while in the kitchen his wife steamed anxiously with the steaming of savoury dishes.

The deserting housekeeper had initiated the two into the traditions of the house. "He's all right wen once you know how to please him. It's no good taking any notice of his langwidge, and he must have his dinner and his food cooked how he thinks it ought'er be cooked. And, mind you, he knows all about it himself ! Though where he picked it up is more than I can say." She had led them into the dining-room where a stain showed on the paper of the wall near the door.

"Now you wouldn't guess what that is ? A leg o' mntton ! Yes, that it is ! The mark of a leg o' mutton. It wasn't cooked to 'is liking and he rang the bell. When I answered it, he sez, 'Do you know all this meat is fit for, the way you've ruined it ?' And he seized the knuckle-end of it in his hand, and flung it at me. It hit the wall, and he wouldn't have the mark took off. 'It'll be a lesson,' he sez. 'And now I'll

go out and get a decent dinner where some woman knows her job,' he sez ; and out he went."

At this point Mrs. Cane had avowed they could not take the place ; they hadn't been used to bad language, and things thrown at them, and she was sure she was not a good enough cook.

" Don't you make no mistake, he can't kill you. And you'll be in clover once you've got used to him," the housekeeper had reassured them.

They were still in the process of getting used to him, and found it anxious work. His liberality left them staring after the economies and grumblings of the House of the Avenue of Roses. He had said to them, " I expect you to be honest ; ask me for what you want."

There seemed nothing for which to ask him. In the green-painted shed in the garden was every tool imaginable.

" 'Pon my soul, Poll, I don't know 'ow to use 'em all," said Joseph ; who had picked up gardening in several make-shift places.

" I wish he didn't 'ave locked doors, they feel like burglars," said his wife. The top floor of the house was not used, and two of the first floor rooms were locked.

Joseph winked. " Nonsense ! It isn't every woman wot 'as the luck to live in a house with two men."

" Luck indeed ! I like your imperence," said Pollie, who at heart agreed with him.

Gallup found his bottle of claret restorative. He said to Joseph, " Tell your wife if I live long enough she'll make a passable cook !" He strolled into the library humming. Like Horace, whose worn edition was seldom returned to the shelf, he was comfortable when filled with the praise of wine.

Mrs. Cane received his message gratefully. " If only he don't send me to 'ell one night——"

" He ain't got much belief in it, or he wouldn't be so easy about sending people there," said the philosophic Joseph. " If the late Mr. A. had given 'imself a freer hand with lang-widge, though it would have bin difficult with her about, he mightn't 'ave gone off in that fit, wich comes of bottling something up."

" There's somethin' in that."

" O' course there is. There was a nasty feeling of suspense

about the house afore he died. You know there was. Here, we gits the whole storm, thunder and lightening, and next hour the air is cleared, and we starts fresh agen."

He sat down at the table with a sense of gratitude, he had never felt in churches, for what he was about to receive, both now at the well-spread table, and in the future, from the master whom fate and Miss Jane had vouchsafed him. He could imagine no better fortune than to spend the rest of his days in Mr. Gallup's service ; with the certainty of saving enough for what he hoped would be a short old age, and his burial. The comforting programme encouraged his general ruminating philosophies of life. He presented that rare phenomenon, a contented human being.

4.

"There are hearts,
So perilously fashioned——"

The history of most fabulous creatures is a long and ancient one—we moderns find no time for extramundane inventions—and the history of the griffin is one of the longest. Most of us only know of him, rampant, on an insurance card, or sitting stonily on entrance gates, or initiating Alice into the mysteries of the Lobster Quadrille. Jane discovered that Uncle Jim knew a great deal more about griffins than that.

The great day of the dinner arrived, and in spite of its drawling length the moment at last came when she walked into the dining-room, set out very splendidly for two, and sat down opposite her uncle. It was a supreme moment. She suppressed any sign of flurry, and spread out her table napkin, and answered questions in a voice but slightly unsteady.

There were five courses, and probably she would have eaten a great deal too much, had it not been for those gaping moments when she forgot her plate altogether under subjugation of the griffin's career. Now he was being harnessed to a chariot of flame, in which the Sun-God pursued the hours through cities long since forgotten ; again he was guarding the unknown treasures of ancient races, while artists sat in strange places and patiently worked his likeness upon panels and walls.

"Was he green?"

"I don't know, Jane. I expect he was the colour the artist wanted him to be."

"Oh!"

"You see you can always see things the colour you want to, if you only try hard enough."

Jane sniggered.

"Now, what's the matter?"

She coloured and shook her head. She had wondered if it would be possible to imagine Uncle Jim's nose green, when it was really quite red.

"I suspect you of being a saucy minx! Come and have coffee in the library."

She slid off her chair and took his arm. In the library Joseph held the tray before her without a smile.

Jane had never been so happy.

"When Joseph has learnt that his feet are to carry him about the house, and not to test whether it is likely to blow down, and when his wife discovers that there are other things to be cooked beside pastry, they'll suit me very well, Jane."

He stood on the hearth with his coffee cup in his hand, and a wood fire burning behind him. Pollie had told her he always had a fire lit in the evenings all the year round. The light flickered on the tight curls of his head, and over the coloured bindings of the shelves of books. She had never seen so many books before; it was enough to give you a headache to think how they could all have been written.

"When you're old enough, you can come and read what you like." He explained the various headings under which they were shelved: Philosophy, Science, Poetry, Fiction, etc. "I had better choose them for you until you are emancipated."

"Is that old enough?"

"Yes, old enough to make your own laws."

"Can we make our own laws?" She put her cup down and set eyes on him.

"They are the only ones that are of any value to us, Jane."

She received this in silence. Presently she asked, "Don't you think things in books are nicer than they really are?"

"What sort of things? No one could make a tree as beautiful in a book as it really is."

"I mean things like love."

Gallup seldom felt staggered, but he had something of

that sensation now as he looked at his niece. Her eyes were fixed on him with absorbing intensity.

"How old are you, Jane?"

"Eleven."

"And what do you think you know about love?"

Her glance was unwavering. "They don't live happy ever after," she said. She thought of the tired man her father; and of Pollie's niece Maria who was not happy with the mangle and the baby; and odd shafts of enlightenment about marriage which she had gathered in the kitchen, and sometimes in the drawing-room.

Gallup was again taken aback; he passed a considering hand over his curls. "You've done very well, Jane—er—remarkably well—in discovering that for yourself, at eleven. Never forget it! It is a valuable part of the beginning of wisdom, and will save you from becoming a sentimental fool. Advice is seldom of value to us, but I'll give you a little, because I am four times eleven years old." He hesitated before a first attempted incursion into the consideration of ethics on her behalf, while she waited expectantly. She had little of the distrust of the present age for sermons; had been bred to them, expected them: was so convinced of general sinfulness as to be tormented by the necessity for a means of deliverance.

"Some day you'll pin those boy's curls of yours on the top of your head, and cover your feet with a skirt. It will be time for you to think about love then. Have you ever grabbed a butterfly and caught it? You know you spoilt it when you did. . . . If you try to grab at other things before you understand what to do with them, you will spoil them too." He shook his head heavily at her, wondering if she would make anything of this bit of universal experience of the disillusioned race of men. Her face looked into his with its almost painful absorption.

"Look here, I'll teach you ping-pong," he exclaimed. "Hang it all, you are only eleven, and I'm not going to talk metaphysics with you!"

"No," she said meekly; and soon he was gasping under the unusual exercise, and begging her to be merciful with his years.

When they met hereafter, in spite of that four times over gap between their years, they talked more often than they played, under his amused apprehension of her individuality.

Jane began to discover the existence of her Self ; a thing which led to a furtive looking in glasses, not approvingly, as other little girls, but to get accustomed to the actuality of being.

In spite of her homage, she laughed at Uncle Jim more than she laughed at the sparrows, or at Anthony Carmichael Wilson. His doings were so at variance with the conventions of The Cot. He presented, indeed, a continual surprise bag of tricks to her.

She would discover him rolling the lawn in a hat which flew two short streamers of coloured ribbon, which fluttered out beyond the back of his neck. The side-view, with the notable nose in opposition to the ribbons, tickled Jane to the verge of exhaustion.

" Oh ! do stop, please, Uncle Jim ! "

The roller ceased rolling.

" The——the hat ! "

He removed it. " What's the matter with it ? I picked it up in Italy. It's very light and shady."

" Have—you looked in the glass with it on ? "

" Only women look in glasses. I suspect you of being an impudent girl, Jane."

She disappeared into the house ; it was really too hot to go on laughing. Joseph came across her wiping her face. He had left his wife crying in the kitchen, and here was another of them ! " Dear, oh ! dear ! " he ejaculated.

" Can I have some water ? " gasped Jane.

" Yes, you can, Miss Jane. But you've got to learn not to take any notice of what your Uncle James sez. As I sez to my wife,—she's there cryin' her eyes out—it ain't likely a man can be a saint ; so wot's the good of you upsetting yourselves ? "

" Is Pollie crying ? I hope she didn't hear me laughing ; you see, I didn't know."

" Laughin' was you, Miss ? I wish you'd step into the kitchen and make 'er laugh."

Jane went and stood in front of the red-eyed Pollie

" You see, Miss," she explained, " he spoke very short to me, a thing your pore father never did. Joseph sez as some man upset 'im, becos he brought a different lot of chrysanthemums to wot he 'imself ordered. And a fool is to him wot you might say a red rag is to a bull. There ! I'm all right now, miss, and you mustn't say anything to him."

"Have you seen the hat, Pollie?"

Mrs. Cane glanced out of the window at her master rearranging the hat on his head.

"Yes, miss?"

"Oh! Pollie; look how funny it is—just now, with the ribbons flying out!"

Mrs. Cane put an apologetic hand in front of her face and smirked nervously.

"I wish he would wear it in the street, and come to The Cot in it."

"He couldn't do that, Miss Jane; wot would your mother say? And don't think we're not happy here, 'cos we are; and there's more easiness of money than with your pore father, pore dear gentleman. But 'e wants gettin' used to, same as that 'at of his wants getting used to."

"I expect it is a pity to get used to things," said Jane. And returned to the garden sobered, perhaps to think out that proposition.

After she had left, Gallup went into the house and looked in a glass; front view first, and then as much of the side and back as he could manage. He then removed the hat and sat down and laughed until Joseph appeared.

"Did you call, sir?"

"No. Tell your wife I always laugh when a woman cries to balance accounts."

Joseph went out. "He is a rum 'um," he meditated, and paraphrased the message for the better consumption of his wife. "He 'opes you'll remember laughin' is better than crying."

"Did 'e say that?"

"Sure enough."

Gallup took "A Sentimental Journey" from a shelf and went back into the garden. There were no inclusions in his library of books of gentle philosophies, written for genteel people by cultured gentlemen with plenty of time. He was read in more strenuous theories of human conduct; or philandered with such amiable triflers as Sterne.

As was natural to a man reaching early middle-age at the end of the nineteenth century, he was a sceptic. Under the light of modern discoveries life in its everyday manifestations appeared to him more mysterious than the heavens of men's religions. That he was a pessimist was also inevitable.

Never had a golden age appeared more possible of attainment under the extending reach of man's inventions ; yet, against the gates of the promised land of innumerable reforms, man himself stood, denying his brothers ; with no flaming angelic sword, but with the dreary weapons of capitalism, and a commercial system under which each man became the bitter rival of his fellow ; and where was found no room for the consideration of beauty, and human love. If Gallup found humour in the outlook it was because it was too grim to preserve one's sanity without.

He shook hands with Sterne across a few pages of the *Journey*, then watched the airy convolutions from his pipe across the twilight sky.

When he had settled down to end his days in the house of the cul-de-sac, after registering the profane vow, he considered that he had shunted all individual human responsibility. But the realisation of the possession of that disturbing sense of humour in his niece Jane appeared likely to trouble the stagnation of his personal cul-de-sac. Heavens ! it was a serious enough matter for a man to possess humour, but for a woman——

5.

Save in the business of ball-catching, Anthony admired Jane as a person who really knew things worth knowing ; who did not object to him asking questions ; and who told stories more exciting than he found in picture books. He did not guess that it was the sudden lowering of her eyes, the catch in her breath, the whisper of her voice, the shudder which took her thin shoulders, which made his heart beat fast while the fate of the hero was yet undecided.

When the stories were exhausted she answered his questions : " Why is the sun round instead of square ? Did the cow invent butter ? Should he be an engine-driver when he was grown-up ? You will marry me when I grow up, won't you Jane ? "

" I don't know whether you will be big enough," said Jane to this last.

" Of course, I shall grow," said he, with some petulance. No man cares to think of refusal, even at eight.

She looked at him, and then out upon some shadowy realm of heroes. "We shall see," she said gently.

It had been a hot and tiring day. She drew him on to her knees. He sat quite still, and wondered when his mother would be better ; she was very often in bed.

"I wish you was my mother, Jane."

She rocked him up and down, then kissed him in a tempest of love. "I am your mother," she said fervently, as she moved the damp fair hair back from his forehead, and looked with a kind of wild tenderness at the blue eyes under their long lashes, at the soft ruddy face and pouting mouth.

Then she wished that someone would take her in their arms and kiss her as she had kissed Tony. There was no one she knew who was likely to do so ; except the wonderful future lover of whom she must not think until her dresses were long.

"Do you think we shall *ever* be grown-up, Tony ?"

"I'm going to have an Eton suit this Christmas."

"Yes, but *really* grown-up."

"I don't know, Jane ; you're pretty old."

"You are a silly little boy," she said wearily.

She heard her mother call from the house and said good-bye to him with a sense of disappointment. She had looked on him from out a gust of maternal passion, and the unsatisfied hunger of her heart, and was chilled because he did not understand.

Her mother had come in exhausted and hot.

"Take my things upstairs, Jane, and fetch my old slippers."

Jane hastened away ; forgetting everything but her mother's distress. Returning, she knelt and pulled the slippers on ; then bent and kissed them.

"Don't do that, child ; they're old and dusty."

"I'm kissing the yourness," said Jane.

Tears crept into Susan's eyes. She thought of George Arrobus, and was overcome at the sight of herself growing older and with no man coming home at night to soothe and look after her. She glanced at Jane hunched up on the floor looking at her. If only she had been a boy ! But she was not, and Phyllis was always busy with her own concerns. There seemed to have been some mistake of Nature's about Jane. The qualities she possessed were those with which Susan credited the male. She had never realised how much Jane had grown up alone, neither the forces which had been

requisitioned to drill Phyllis into the acceptable girl of the age.

"You're an affectionate little thing," she murmured. "I really must see about some school for you. You've been running wild for over a year."

"Am I bound to go to school?"

"Of course. I can't afford for you to go to an expensive one. Has Phyllis given you any lessons to-day?"

"No; she said I tried to be silly yesterday. But I didn't."

Susan sighed. "I must make enquiries," she said.

Jane made her comfortable with cushions. She liked to fetch and carry both for her sister and mother; they had pretty ways of thanking her. Sometimes she thought: "I wish they would love me when I haven't done anything for them." Nevertheless to give herself out to them, to press over the cup of her service, to find them satisfied under her ministrations, was Jane's best happiness.

Susan's impression of the rarity of the love of her younger daughter was a fleeting one. She admitted she did not understand the child. The admission constituted an indulgence for shortcomings on her part. She was thankful for the child's independence, and her freedom from ailments; and discounted a spasmodic appetite, and a certain fragility of aspect by concluding that Jane was wiry. Her precocity, too, was not of the sharp and impudent kind; she was more of a child in many ways than Phyllis had been at her age. Susan could only murmur again—a funny child; with the transitoriness of thoughts which did not suggest to her that children of strong imaginative quality remain more child-like than others; too deeply impressed by the world they fashion, and gaze so deeply into, to take upon themselves the imprint of the world around.

Jane would stare at her mother wondering what it was that made her face less gentle than the Dream-mother's had been. She was conscious that in spite of the delicacy of colouring, unmarked by any depth of tone in eyes and hair, that there was an effect of beauty unshadowed by tenderness; the blue eyes never suffused with any light beyond their own.

Jane had no words to convey the impression of a growing sense of something cruel in the mother who was yet so fair, and soft, and ready of tears. But the impression deepened.

She sat almost as silent at the table as when a baby she had

been confused before the babel of the drawing-room. "Why are they always unkind about people?" she thought; and turned to Phyllis who was saying:

"Just fancy Florrie Golden marrying Iden's son! Of course they are big grocers—provision dealers I think they call themselves—and he has had a good education. But living in the same place, it isn't very nice for the Golden's."

"Florrie won't live here when they are married," remarked her mother.

"Is he wicked?" asked Jane.

"Don't ask silly questions. Of course not."

"Why mustn't he marry her?" she persisted.

"Because people of our class don't marry tradesmen; at least, not small tradesmen."

Jane considered this no answer. She decided if she met a nice grocer to talk to him if she could, and see what was the matter with him.

"Why shouldn't I?" she asked Gallup.

"Just snobbery, Jane. You'll learn to practise it one day."

"I shan't."

She acted on that valiant "shan't" by the time she was fourteen. It was part of the process of her loss of reputation. She was disappointed that the youth was a butcher instead of a grocer, but she judged it near enough to satisfy her sense of rebellion. She found him robbing a bird's nest and accused him of cruelty. He was a well-mannered youth, and explained to her civilly the carefulness of his method; and showed her one or two eggs belonging to birds whose names she had never heard. She accompanied him on a short ramble along a hedge row. Afterwards when they met, she would stop and enquire if he had added anything to his collection. His manner was civil and frank. He left the neighbourhood at the end of the year, to Jane's regret; but someone had seen her talking to him and had told her mother. Susan was horrified. Excited and tearful by turns, she endeavoured to impress Jane with the extent of her sin.

She had no credit to give in her judgments; having put by no capital of character upon which to draw in generosity for the judgment of others. She lived in her relations to them as it were from hand to mouth, in a succession of small meanesses, and small impulses of kindness; always superficially, and with no belief in the longer reach of others.

Jane was sorry to vex her mother. She kept her eyes from her face, because she disliked most to find her mother's face disfigured by anger. But she found herself unable to feel sorry for what she had done. "I don't feel wicked; and he was a nice boy," she was saying all the time to herself.

Susan unable to wrest a confession of repentance from her, sent her to bed at tea-time; and decided that Jane had inherited her brother's lack of ordinary morals. She carried the weight of this conclusion with her in a heavy smileless manner for a few days. The attitude being a tiring one, she relinquished it, in the hope that the incident was perhaps a childish escapade. She left it at that for convenience sake; with suspicion to keep guard over a possibly too great generosity.

She was still impressed with that generosity when she bought Jane a new hat and coat and muff for Christmas, for which she had given more money than she had intended. The price she paid was the result of a clever saleswoman's tactics. Susan hated to say "No." She had not been accustomed to limit herself to a pound or two. Once out of the shop she viewed the transaction entirely as a piece of considered maternal generosity.

Jane's clothes were shabby; she was glad to have new ones, but was unable to like these in spite of the price. She went round on Sunday to show them to Gallup; and laid the muff, which was decorated with frillings of lace and flowers, on his table.

"It does not keep my hands warm, and I shall lose it," she wailed.

"You must put a string on it."

She drew his attention to the rosettes which decorated her coat up the front. "It looks like a piece of meat trimmed for Christmas. Now, doesn't it?" she urged.

He surveyed her. "It's no good kicking against it, Sancta Simplicitas. I shouldn't have chosen it, but I'm an ignorant male. You've got to be fashioned like a yew peacock whether you like it or not. It isn't any good bemoaning the shape Nature made you; you've got to remember the shape man has trimmed you into for his liking—most of 'em like it. Anyway it's a habit with them." He asked her to consider his own clothes. "Aren't I respectable enough for a parson? I have had to be to earn my bread—— But think of the price!"

Jane wasn't sure what this meant, but she examined the well-cut tweed suit. He was the only director of his firm who had refused to wear coat-tails. She discerned an incongruity between his person and the details of the suit. "Your nose——" she began.

"Ah! you are right, my variable Iris! It relieves the monotony; it is still my own. I don't know whether yours will save you. The bridge is of a dominant straightness, but there is a delicacy about the nostrils—— I suspect you're made wrong somehow, Jane. You must remember that it has been one of the most widespread achievements of the Victorian age to train and dress-up simpering useless women for the marriage market. Generally speaking there isn't any other market for you."

She told him of the butcher and her mother's anger.

He shook his head ponderously. "These things are of the law if not of the prophets. You seem to have a wrong attitude towards laws: you look at them as if they were curiosities in a museum, and remote from life. You have got to accept laws without questioning and without consideration."

Her alert memory brought her an answer. "What about the only laws that are any good; the ones that we make for ourselves?"

"You're only fourteen, Jane. Go steady, go steady!"

She turned rebellious eyes on him.

"Come and spend Christmas Day with me," he said. "I understand your mother and Phyllis go to friends this year, where probably they will not want rebels. I'll try and lose the muff for you if I can."

He watched her go down the road, and wondered, not for the first time during the last three years, what the devil he could do for her. He allowed that his moral sense was lethargic, and hardly equal to standing out on her behalf—save in a conversational bout with his sister Susan, romantic idiot—to the extent of attempting to start her on one of the few intellectual careers recently opened up to women. Neither did Jane strike him as suitable material for professionalism. He saw her as constantly vibrating to spiritual emotions; and judged there was little spiritual activity in the professions; hard-headedness was the desirable qualification. But Jane though shrewd was almost abnormally sensitive. He dismissed the dilemma by a familiar and masculine anticipation.

"I'll order the largest turkey I can get for Christmas," he thought; and his mind recovered a genial alliance with his body.

Christmas Day was warm, Anthony found no difficulty in disengaging a worm from the soil, which he put into an envelope with a card for Jane, and dropped into the letter place of The Cot. He hung about hoping she might come out; but was afraid to knock because there was such an air of Sunday about the day. Tears, very much against his will, trembled on his lashes. It was dull at home; his mother was not well and his father was grumpy.

If Jane had seen him at this moment—Jane who slaked her starved affections at his being—she would certainly not have left him. But she had gone early to Uncle Jim's, because her mother and Phyllis had a long journey before them; and The Cot was shut up, and given over to a peace of earth unknown to the lives of its inmates.

Anthony's sorrow was short-lived. His mother, with a heroism he was not to gauge for many years, subdued for him the evidences of a painful and mortal disease, and played with him throughout the day at games quite other than Sunday ones; her only respite being when his father took him for a walk. Anthony decided that when he grew up he would not be the kind of father his own was. He would also buy a great number of things for his mother.

At the house at the end of the cul-de-sac there was a tremendous stir. Gallup was decorating the dinner-table himself, behind a locked door. Jane was in the garden with a splendid new book of legends; and it was warm enough to read in the summer-house, if you kept your coat on. Joseph and his wife were in lively argument in the kitchen.

"He's no business to say damn and hell before that child," she was saying, as she opened the oven door and placed an immense turkey within.

"You've got all your work cut out in cooking this dinner, without bothering about 'im. And, mind you, it's peace on earth and goodwill to men, this day."

But circumstances were proving too much for his wife's habitual placidity. She took a desperate resolve. "And just becos it is Christmas Day, and becos, as like as not, something *will* go wrong with the dinner, I'm going to speak to him."

"What do you mean, Poll?" Joseph stopped his vigorous cleaning of knives.

His wife was removing her soiled apron with a face of immense determination.

He made a last effort. "They take 'em to church and let 'em hear far wus things." But she was half-way across the hall.

She knocked hastily upon the dining-room door.

"You can't come in until dinner, Jane." The voice was so kindly that Mrs. Cane was heartened in her resolution.

"It's me, please, sir, Mrs. Cane—cook, sir."

"What is it?" The tone was again familiarly curt.

"Please sir, I want to have a word with you about the dinner," she said, with a woman's cunning.

The door flung open. She stood her ground though she paled perceptibly.

"If you please, sir, something might go wrong with the dinner."

"I shan't forget to speak about it if it does."

"If you please, sir, I held Miss Jane in my arms when she was a hour old. She is only fourteen now."

"Heaven help you, woman! What's that to do with the dinner? You don't mean you think the turkey is fourteen years old?"

"No, sir, it certainly isn't; as anyone could see from the feet and beak, and the way the feathers come out. But Miss Jane, sir—she ain't old enough if anything was to go wrong, to hear about—hell, and damn." The final words came as a charge from a gun.

The long line of Gallup's upper lip twisted upon the protuberant lower lip. He looked into his cook's affrighted face.

"You've got more character than I thought, Mrs. Cane. I'll think about Miss Jane's age. I don't see why it should include mercy for you, though, if——"

But Mrs. Cane was already out of earshot. With a murmured "Thank you, sir," she hurried into the kitchen to her husband.

"He as good as thanked me, there now! I've got that off my conscience, thank heaven! I think I'll have a drop of that cowslip wine; there's more than I shall want for the trifle."

Joseph poured it out for her with admiration.

"Well, you're a plucked 'un! And so long as there's no 'arm done, it's all right." As something of a moralist, he was glad to see virtue triumph if it was not at the expense of his comfort.

Gallup joined his niece in the summer-house and proceeded to consider her age. He thought he might have guessed it about eleven; but that was a man's judgment and superficial at that, when he recalled certain talks together under the absorbed unwavering eyes, when it might have seemed not unreasonable to suggest thirty, or any figure indicative of a certain maturity in the exchange of ideas.

"There is no doubt you are a young child, Sancta Simplicitas," he said. "Damn and hell are classic words; but not respectable except in the pulpit. You had—er—better not use them. I'm too old to change my habits."

She looked up quickly. She liked him to swear; it gave her the sense of another world, a world more real than the one she knew. And how could she be shocked by terms heard in so familiar a use? Burnt potatoes had been the last occasion.

"Oh! no, don't change," she said, anxiously.

He went on: "You will know some day that there are many kinds of hell which a man makes for himself, and there are many ways in which he damns himself. They're very real; and real things have little sense of politeness. You must forget them." Again the gap between their years became negligible before his sense of some common deep-rooted unanimity.

She answered him:

"I don't forget; even if I want to." Across her mind there had flashed that haunting eternity of blue with which she had never come to terms.

"You'd better give me a nudge when you find me about to say those words when more, er—paralysed females than yourself are about."

They glanced with affection into each other's eyes: it was their first secret compact. He jerked a thumb towards the open door of the library. "In there you'll find an author's guide to writing. In it you are told to spell heaven with a capital and hell with a small aitch. That is the kind of respectable dig you must learn to give the devil."

"Will you tell me the story of the devil one day?"

"It begins like this: Once in the time that never was. We shall then discover that the serpent was formerly the symbol of good, and Lucifer the morning star. . . . I shall beat you with a lictor's rod if you go into the dining-room until dinner is served."

The dinner was a magnificent affair; surpassing the one in the past, which had stood out in solitary splendour. Between that one and this school-days and evening lessons had intervened; and, upon the frequent exodus of the general servant, there was housework which her mother, of course, must not do, and Phyllis always found a reason for not sharing. "Though it's her hands she's thinking of," thought Jane. Also Uncle Jim had been away for months together on business, so that although he had spoken of another dinner "someday," the time had lapsed to this Christmas Day.

Joseph waited on them in a new suit which was a discarded one of his master's. Jane noticed how much quieter and quicker he had become since that other dinner. They sat in state, Uncle Jim behind the turkey, and Jane craning her neck from the other end over the fine litter of the table. On it was an amazing jumble of miniature toys; every little animal of its kind walked there, and many of no kind at all. Between them were dolls' meals glued to lilliputian plates, and gorgeous crackers reared against dishes of fruit and sweetmeats.

At Joseph's first exit she asked, "Do you always have a Christmas dinner like this?" The query was awed to the point of a whisper.

"Surely not, Jane! I'm a poor bachelor, and you are the first woman who has sat opposite to me in my own home on a Christmas Day." He cast a reminiscent glance on the woman who had occasioned the profane vow, and who had preferred restaurants to homes.

A slow blush took Jane at the word woman; and at the thought that all this array of things was for her.

"Thank you very—very much, Uncle Jim."

He poured out wine; clear red wine which Jane liked to look at, and lifted his glass. "Sancta Simplicitas, I have seen some human beings in the making, but you are the first woman. . . . Mostly they don't get as far as being women; the majority remain ladies. That is a stage I foresee you will never compass. Now get on with that turkey or we shall never finish it."

They grew hilarious when the pudding finally crowned the feast in a lake of fire ; and pulled an extravagant number of crackers, from which she dressed him in a nurse's cap, and managed to secure an inadequate apron at his middle. As she remarked no one could call it a waist.

" Ah ! you will not marry, Jane ! You shall live with me by the river of Apulia, and roam the shores of the Adriatic ; there are forests of pine deeper than your eyes."

How she blushed ! No one had ever likened her eyes to pine forests ; she could scarcely forbear a peep in the glass.

" I wonder what Phyllis is doing," she murmured ; with a happy sense of outdoing everybody this Christmas.

" Not making a laughing stock of a defenceless old gentleman."

" But you can't be old or you wouldn't be so silly," laughed Jane. " They have gone to a Miss—Miss. I've forgotten her name, but I know what she looks like."

" Well ? "

" She is straight and flat—like sandwich boards without the man."

" Ah ! Mind on the same principle perhaps ? "

She nodded wisely.

" That comes of chattering, and don't you forget it. Women chatter until they chatter all sanity out of life. When you are a little older instead of learning parlour tricks suppose we do some reading together. If women could be taught to think more they'd talk less. There is an essay on Silence—yes, I think you ought to understand most of it now. I'll give it to you, when you go."

So the wonderful day wore on, in talking nonsense and some sense, and learning something of the game of life, and something of the game of billiards on a small table put over the one on which they had dined.

Jane lectured Gallup about his cue ; he stirred the fire occasionally with the butt end, which she said no sportsman would do.

Being again tickled with that rare mixture in her of a lively sensibility ready to bubble up with a little warmth, and the considering gaze of her eyes, he made further insistence that she must certainly keep house for him when he was rich enough to retire.

" Don't you listen to any young courting rascal. They

lie without knowing it. And to please 'em you have to conform to regulation pattern: you've got to be braced up in the middle, braced down to life. Yes, don't look at me like that; it's true enough. . . . Your eyes are wrong, my dear. They look as though afraid of life; which isn't regulation fear. It is the thousand and one conventions you've got to be afraid of, and you won't even see them. That is more than careless: socially considered it is criminal."

Neither of them had any foreshadowing—unless the very make of her was a prophecy—even under her excited sense of the splendour of the hour, and his experienced sense of the rarity of that red wine, of the coming of an Armageddon which would subvert ladyism and conventions with the same ruthlessness as it obliterated the face of a continent. Behind their conviviality the only foreshadowing was that of the reaction to a society whose apathy was apparent even to the pulse of youth, and which settled like a pall upon middle age. The sickness which precedes as well as follows war was upon life. The close of the century was as that of a man come to a feverish end in a world of conflict and exploitation, and distractedly conscious of the wreck of that which had once flamed upward with convincing power and promise.

What Jane did not understand of his expatiations on life she pondered after. He made her think, which is what he wanted; except when he talked to her to please himself.

He took her home, and she went up to bed in a flutter; conscious of having learnt something of the meaning of personality, stirred too, by the first pride of girlhood.

From the miniature window the night stretched back into eternal distances.

She hoped that Anthony had had a nice Christmas: Anthony who was so dear to kiss. She got into bed and crossed her hands over her small bosom where it sometimes pleased him to cuddle.

Her soul slipped into those profound distances of night, which hold the eternal memory and the eternal forgetfulness.

7.

Jane discovered the larch roses before anyone else and looked for them long before they could possibly appear. At first the little knobs on the twigs appeared rounder; and

pulling down a branch, she would find the green cushion of the bud frilled round with brown. Another fortnight and the green was visible from her window, surmounting the knobs like pincushions. But the March wind was bitter without ; her face was colourless and pinched under it. If only the summer would come !

Perhaps Anthony would come into tea ; sometimes seeking comfort because he could find nothing to do at home, sometimes cross because he had been punished. Sometimes she chid him :

" That wasn't very decent of you, Tony."

" Why not ? "

She did not reply.

" Why not ? " he repeated, with some anxiety.

She stared into his face. " You've got to grow up good, or we shan't be friends."

" Oh ! all right, Jane."

" Promise ! "

He nodded his head.

" Then I'll show you something."

She took him up to her room, and they leaned out of the window. On a branch that swayed in the thin March sunlight were the small larch roses, of the same subdued softness of red as sea-anemones ; they studded the top side of the twig like buttons.

" Tony ! aren't they lovely ? "

Tony was interested but did not share her rapture. At the Preparatory School to which he now went the fellows did not notice these sort of things.

Jane looked at him curiously. She wanted to kiss him ; but he seemed to have grown so much of a stranger since he had gone to school.

She watched alone, through a week of sunshine, the spraying larch boughs grow into banners of green. They swayed and moved to some impulse she longed to share. The glory which was conferred upon the Spring was in part a glory communicated by the shy mystery of her youth's awakening consciousness.

Then amid the glamour and the light the windows were darkened in Anthony's home. Death had freed his mother from her long battle with pain.

" Really, it's a good thing," said Susan Arrobus.

But Jane could not discover what she really thought. She wanted to go and see Anthony, but no one asked her. Death appeared to her this time as a dark and haunting thing. When her father had died there had been so much to do for others, and in the house there had been kindness everywhere. But now she went out to school and to the shops, and no one seemed to care that Anthony's mother had left the world, when it was growing green, for a heaven that was very far away.

Jane wept for Anthony's mother ; though she had only seen her a few times : a pale sorrowful woman who had filled her with awe.

As for Anthony what could he feel but bewilderment ? Sometimes he cried in corners, softly, but wiped his eyes fiercely before the nurse's " poor little fellow." He studied his father's attitude, but it gave him little leading. His father did not appear to be really miserable, Tony thought. Sometimes he started whistling and stopped very suddenly. He smoked a great deal, and when he talked to Anthony it was about a boarding-school to which he must go. The term would commence in a fortnight ; there would be things to buy for him " When all this is over."

He saw little of Jane during that fortnight. Now that he was going to a public school his father treated him quite differently. He told him about his own school : what the boys expect of a new boy ; he must not be a fool with his pocket money ; he ought to make good at cricket. He said nothing about the lessons. In spite of the talks Anthony felt very much at sea about the kind of life he was going into. But he nodded and said, " Oh ! yes. Of course."

When he went to say good-bye to Jane he hoped she would not kiss him. He stood up stiffly in his new dark clothes and Jane was embarrassed.

" Shall I write to you ? " she asked.

He was not sure whether he ought to have letters from girls. He didn't want to risk anything as a new boy.

" I don't think you had better, until I write to you," he said. His manner was a little lordly. He had had lunches in town with his father, and had gathered something of the manner in which some men speak to women.

Jane said at the last moment, rather breathlessly, " Don't forget me, Anthony."

He waved to her and left. She never heard from him. She went to her room and cried.

They were the only tears that any woman shed for Anthony during the years of his youth. . . . He accepted such views of women as a boy may gather from the life of a public-school and then of a college. His holidays he mostly spent with his father in hotels, fishing and golfing. As he grew older a latent resentment sometimes stirred in him at what he believed to be his father's indifference to the far sweet memory of his mother. Gradually he learnt to know the extent of her suffering. He had her photograph enlarged and hung in his room at college. The sentimental regard he felt for it had no power to influence the general light contemptuous attitude to women which he shared with his friends. Of the spiritualising forces beginning to work to the surface in the relations of men and women he knew nothing ; except to laugh at them if they actually obtruded themselves upon him. He shared in the uproarious doings by which Cambridge decided against giving women the honours which they had won ; a fact in future ages, to discredit the Englishman's reputation as a sportsman, and which might even be said to have cast somewhat of a shadow over the cups which stood to his credit on his study shelf ; if any principle of sportsmanship was to be considered.

Jane continued to mourn him. His going brought back to her the loss of her father. She became listless, and what her mother called peevish during the summer.

"I don't believe he will ever come back," she said to Gallup. "They have put a board up To Let in the garden."

"Well, he wasn't much of a companion for you."

"He was," she snapped.

"If he had been three years older instead of younger——"

"I shouldn't have liked him," said she, opposing any consolation. "It was the same hot weather when father died. . . . He used to say, 'you can't get blood out of a stone.'" Jane's eyes deepened with the recalled awful mystery of the words.

"Ah!" said Gallup. Then half to himself: "She looks soft enough, too." He whistled gently.

"She?" said Jane. "It was money."

"Oh! was it?"

"Yes," said Jane, absently ; who had seen, under a flash

of her rapidly growing insight, that the words might sometimes have included her mother. "It's true she can't really love anybody," she thought; with a sudden depressing recognition of reality.

She left Gallup abruptly, saying she had lessons to do.

The school at which she was supposed to receive education was one of a kind to be found in suburbs at the end of the last century, and by no means extinct yet. Its head-mistress was a perplexed spinster of "nice" family who had been reared for matrimony, and, having failed to obtain an entrance, had carried the confusion of her frustrated ideas into school hours. Her fees being "reasonable" while at the same time the school had a reputation for taking only "nice" children, suburban women, faced continually by dress and housekeeping debts incurred by the accepted preposterous standard of living, immolated their daughters as an offering to economy. They said the head-mistress was "quite a lady." As for the pupils they gave her flowers from their gardens, because it was the thing to do, and laughed at her whenever they got an opportunity. They said that school was silly, and so it was. Jane remained here until she was sixteen; when her mother was glad to be free of any further obligation as to her schooling.

Gallup had offered to pay her fees at a good boarding-school, but his sister had refused: "It is kind of you, James. But she is very useful in the house in the time that she is free. Besides it is no good giving her extravagant ideas when we have so little to spend."

To Gallup's surprise Jane appeared to agree with her mother.

"I don't know if I should like the girls," she said; and remembered the small giggling creatures whose brief acquaintance had been so painful in The House of the Avenue of Roses.

"Wouldn't matter if you didn't. You would go to learn."

"But they would all be there. And I should have to see them always at a boarding school. Perhaps they would sleep in the same room." Almost it was terror which took her eyes at this thought. The night was the one time when she was free to be alone and to think the things one wanted to think. Further, she was possessed of a fierce and engulfing reserve, which could not face the idea of the easy intrusions and familiarities of a common sleeping place. Stray

whisperings at school lent point to her fears, half-heard suggestions of intolerable speech.

She faced him agitated but determined. "I couldn't go—I couldn't!" she urged. "You can teach me all I want to know."

"I don't know what you are jibbing at; but anyway your mother won't agree, so there's an end of it."

Her real education, which might have begun when she left school, was thwarted by continual domestic hazards. Susan had no patience with the ignorant general servants which were all she could afford to pay. She did not see that they, like Phyllis, were in the house marking time until they should get married. They took no interest in their work because they had not been taught its rudimentary elements, neither that it possessed any vital value. The incompetence and uncleanness of their housework was only surpassed by the crude stupidities of their cooking. Throughout the nation the sale of patent medicines increased yearly under the general chaotic mismanagement of homes.

Jane was continually occupied in an attempt to make good these deficiencies. In the periods which ensued between the going and coming of servants she undertook the work of the house with a kind of surprised pride to find how well she got through it, and how pleased her mother was with the things she cooked. She read diligently out of an enormous cookery book.

At the lunch table her mother and Phyllis talked of the new fashions, and whether Phyllis could manage them with the help of good patterns. There were reasons why Phyllis must look smart this summer, and must not get rough hands: rumours of a possible engagement and no more work, even dressmaking, for the rest of her life.

"It would certainly be a load off my mind," said her mother.

"If only he wasn't so fat," objected Phyllis.

"You can't have everything," replied her mother, with her faint habitual sigh. "Of course, I shouldn't think of influencing you. There is no need to give him a definite answer yet if he should propose."

"Are you in love?" asked Jane, staring at her sister.

"Don't be silly, Jane," snapped Phyllis.

Her mother gave a little laugh.

Jane remembered the hot, tired man, her father. She also thought of the "Sonnets from the Portuguese" which she had just discovered.

"My dear Jane, you shouldn't stare. You might sometimes think that you had never seen Phyllis and me before," her mother admonished.

"I didn't know I was."

It was an "At home" day. Visitors came to the house, and the little drawing-room, overburdened with furniture, was very hot. Coloured sweet cakes, poisonous to sedentary stomachs, were arranged on frilly d'oyleys. It might be charitable to assign to them some of the cruelty and futility of the ensuing talk. New dresses were worn with overpowering consciousness, and monstrous hats capped the dresses.

Jane recovered from all this when The Cot was finally wrapped in darkness. She sat in front of her dressing-table, looking out at the square of night in which a star was set. In the garden a lily gleamed.

Jane had commenced to write verse. Looking intensely at the paper before her, she wrote: "Where lilies in a white surprise——"

A thrill went through her. What if she were a poet! It was a staggering idea. She turned to the glass and became a little distraught to find herself something like what she conceived a poet should be. The cloud of her hair hung above the dark fervour of her eyes. There was exaltation and ecstasy upon the face. . . . Then she saw, and for the first time, the manner of her crooked smile as it ran to greet the image in the glass.

It was the smile which brought her down from the poet's height. Why, she knew not; but it struck a sense of helplessness into her, as indicating some dependent creature whose chief demand was not a height to climb but a heart to lose herself in. Out of the quick reaction another look at the image brought an aspect of more consolation: "I look—pretty," she thought.

So eclipsed had she been by the fair beauty of Phyllis that the idea appeared preposterous. She glanced round the room. On the back of a chair was a length of yellow ribbon; her sister left such litter about the house, and a few days earlier had tied it round her hair, in one of her restless attempts to appear continually in different guise. "I can make it look

prettier than that," Jane had exclaimed ; and with sure instinct had rebound the ribbon round her sister's head in such a way as to hide its rather flat outline ; swelling out the fair abundant hair in one place and confining it in another.

" Yes, that does look better," Phyllis had owned grudgingly.

" It looks sweet—simply sweet !" cried Jane impulsively.

At which Phyllis had eyed her curiously for a moment, then concluded that her sister really did not mind that she, Phyllis, was so much prettier. In her own heart Phyllis owned to a deadly envy against other girls who were pretty ; and lost no opportunities of directing splenetic talk against them. They were presumable strong rivals in the game of hunt-the-husband.

Jane now took this length of ribbon and tied it solemnly round her head. It shone wonderfully in the candle light, so did the hair and eyes.

She possessed an overwhelming sense of the power of beauty ; and reiterated with intense solemnity : " I believe I am pretty—sometimes."

She unwound the ribbon soberly and put away the paper and pencil. The recognition was like a prayer to her, which closed the day to other interests.

Later in the week she tied the ribbon again round her hair and went into the drawing-room. The vicar was talking to her mother. He was round and fat, and kept saying " Ah ! yes —ah ! yes."

Phyllis snarled in her ear, " What on earth have you put that ribbon on for ? "

8.

Jane's sense of the disparity between the comfortable casual-talking vicar and her own apprehensions of spiritual things, led her to excursions which might bring her some recognition of truth. She went to all the churches within walking distance and came away bewildered. An enveloping insincerity in them grew upon her to the extent of horror. Suppose they were all lying. A supposition which opened up an earthly hell before which the horrors of the fiery one of her childhood paled ; and which revived the insecurity of that hour which in the light of eternity can never be the last,

and that unending blue which may yet be the edge of an unguessed heaven.

She sought Gallup ; and found him among a pile of new books.

" My monthly gorge ! Well—what have you been doing ? "

" Oh ! nothing. . . . *He* didn't come in last evening, and we all had to sit and wait. Not Mr. Needham, the other one. Then Phyllis said she couldn't stand him because he is so opinionated. Of course Mother made excuses for him. But Phyllis said they were both beastly selfish. I don't know what will happen ? "

" It isn't any good bothering. It is the usual courting game. Take a warning, that's all."

" I don't believe it's the usual one."

" Take my word, Jane, it is."

She did not grant him the same right to speak with authority on this subject as on others. What she said was : " One day I shall say damn very loudly. It might help her to make up her mind."

" For heaven's sake, do nothing of the sort ; it would only be put down to me ! "

" We went to a social evening at the church last night," she wandered off again ; " I don't know what made it social perhaps because the chairs were in clumps instead of rows. . . . Do you remember the dressed-up performing animals we saw at Christmas ? You know you said it was making fools of them."

" Well ? "

" Somehow this looked just the same. . . . The evening before we went to a mothers' entertainment. I cut up cake. The mothers collected as many husbands as they could——"

" Look here ! What do you want to say to me ? You are only marking time, you know."

Jane plunged. " What do you know about God, and heaven, and death ? "

He looked out upon a long grey rain which obscured the summer sky. So had the years obscured his boyhood's heaven.

" *"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum,"* Jane," he said. " Which means—for you—surely you can leave the study of eschatology for a little."

" What is that ? "

"Of the last things : heaven, hell, judgment, death."

She spoke in another rush. "I want to be good."

"Oh, Lord ! Jane."

Jane waited.

He blew his nose with a sound like a trumpet. Her statement singularly affected him.

"You can't take life seriously, Jane."

As she ignored that, he found himself providing her answer, and saying to himself : "What then does one take seriously ?" Her eyes were upon him, tortured by her sense of the incomprehensibility of things. He knew that ; but what could he say ? He had never set out to be a guide to anyone. His sparring with Susan arose from sheer irritability ; a desire to annoy not to convince.

At last he said : "I'm not a sound guide, Jane ; I haven't hungered and thirsted after righteousness." The words appeared disturbing. He hurried on :

"Someone has said that it takes all the wisdom of the wise to correct the folly of the good. There is an unconscious goodness of youth which is of value to our middle-aged world, and to people like me. Preserve as much of that as you are able. Suspicion is the rotting canker of civilised life ; but I don't think it will trouble you. For the rest, try and acquire the wholesome correction of wisdom for your womanhood."

"How ?"

"Study art, study nature, study books, study your fellow-creatures. You'll find plenty of shams in art, in literature and life : religion does not monopolise them all."

"And Christianity ?"

She was determined not to let him off anything, he thought ; and cast an inward glance over that section of his mind where religion was labelled and sealed. Yet what he said was different to what was set down there.

"So far as I can judge, Jane, Christianity, as practised by civilised communities to-day, has lost any divine authority. . . . We have passed through an age of destruction where religion is concerned. There are men who are trying to reconstruct a new faith : men who find it impossible to substitute what men call science for religion. . . . There was a sect of the Gnostics who believed that religion and law were the origin of misery and sin, warping the originally pure instincts o

mankind. I give it you for another view. . . . Religion and law have bred hypocrisy; a vice little known to the Pagans. When you read *Peer Gynt* you will see what a modern soul looks like stripped of pretence. Hedging, hedging—that is what you will find people practise where religion is concerned. Can't you be satisfied just to think of your youth for a little while longer, Jane? When I see evidences of more than usual depravity in you I'll warn you."

Her disconcerting eyes were still fixed on him. He fidgetted, raking his curls with his fingers. "Truth is, if you've made up your mind to think, you must make up your mind to be lonely, too. I can't impose my sense of truth on you; one has a choice in truth as in other things." This statement relieved his mind of a sense of insufficiency, almost of some kind of meanness towards her youth, which sometimes forced itself upon him when they talked. The astonishing vitality of her outlook towards the whole circle of questioning life, made him join issue with Susan in her desire that Jane should have been a boy. She would then have taken that restless mind out and among her fellows, drank deep of experiences, and become either a philosopher accepting all experience, or a genius, exploiting all. But as a woman—He was profoundly sorry for Jane. Neither was his sympathy lightened by any vision of genius taking to itself human material, and spending its days in moulding this into spiritual shape; building up heavenly mansions in earthly habitations: the feminine genius of the race as opposed to the masculine.

A subdued Jane was looking absently upon the windows where the light rain had ceased to fall. It seemed that courage was the one indispensable quality for everybody, as well as for heroes and conquerors. But she was assailed by hours of overpowering weakness, when to be safe in the arms of Jesus haunted her as with hope of unending refuge from the dark mystery of living. Yet she was honest enough to suspect cowardice in the longing; to see in it something of the attitude which accompanied her mother's sentimental hymn singing.

"Mother wants to see you," she said abruptly.

"Come along then," he said relieved. "There is a bit of blue in the sky."

He bustled about their going, while she wondered why it

was so difficult to talk, even to Uncle Jim, about the things she thought about most.

Outside the arching blue was far and clear after the rain, the trees stood shining and gentle. She was moved with resentment at the stupid acquiescence of older people in the mean routine of their lives. Perhaps her face showed something of it as she pushed on a little ahead of him.

"We are undoubtedly a good deal mad, Jane," he said soothingly. "Perhaps it is largely a matter of health. We haven't been able to keep pace with our many inventions. And we eat bacon and eggs for breakfast! You can't think on bacon and eggs; it clogs the machinery."

Susan had a string of questions awaiting him—women were so helpless in these things—Was the house assessed rightly? Did she deduct the house duty from the rent? Must she pay for a new pane of glass or the landlord? He did not think Jane looked well? The child had not complained. They could not possibly afford a holiday this year—

"I'll take her with me," he said abruptly. "I shall go to Devonshire for September."

Susan raised her light eyebrows in protest against what she considered his unfair favouritism.

"You never take any notice of Phyllis; I suppose because she is like me."

"My dear Susan, Phyllis has never played upon my vanity; whereas Jane comes and hunts me out and consults me about the universe. Naturally I am flattered."

"I think you ought to be careful what you talk to her about, James. She is peculiar enough."

"Peculiar?"

Susan sniffed delicately. "Did you hear about her meeting Brown, the butcher's son, summer before last?"

"She told me he was intelligent."

"You know perfectly well that girls can't afford to do that sort of thing. People will be calling her fast; no doubt have."

"What the devil does it matter? Chastity isn't a virtue induced by law or conventions, but a quality of temperament. Women ought to understand that, even if men don't. There's a lot of talk going on about woman regenerating the male; one of the best chances that I can see for the regeneration of both is a less suspicious companionship between them—and probably the abolition of marriage." (There was no doubt

he included this to annoy Susan.) "You women refuse to look cleanly at these things. Fact that! Men may be unclean in their relations sometimes, but so are women in their outlook. That boy probably gained an impetus towards clean thinking by Jane's frank acceptance of him as an interesting human being, and not just a sex. Women need to talk less about morality and believe more in it."

Her heavy lids were over her eyes, she said coldly, "You can't stop people talking."

"Let 'em talk! You must have scandal where you get a lot of idle, thriftless women whose largest interests are the dressmaker, the cook, and the afternoon call. Now that child-bearing has been made easy they never face a living reality in the course of their miserable lives."

She got up indignantly. "Really, James——"

He got up, too. He did not want to fall out with Susan, because he liked this idea of Jane coming with him for a holiday; though for the moment he anathematised her for being the goad which had whipped him into speech with Susan; a recurrent calamity which always upset his digestion.

"I may have gone a little far in that last remark, but——"

His sister was quickly mollified. She had no wish either to fall out with James, whose advice already had saved her money.

"Here is the tea," she said sweetly, and opened the door for Jane.

When he got his cup he waved it at his niece. "Here is to our holiday, Sancta Simplicitas! You are coming to Devonshire with me for September."

He grinned at her incredulous face. "There are streams there like your eyes: clean, and fresh of the wind and hills."

"How ridiculous you are, James!" said Susan.

9.

"Sense with keenest edge unused,
Yet unsteal'd by scathing fire,
Lovely feet as yet unbruised
On the ways of dark desire;
Sweetest hope that lookest smiling
O'er the wilderness defiling."

Robert Bridges.

The firm of which Gallup was a director had made him an attractive offer if he would consent to live in the South of France for the next four years to superintend the management

of a new branch they were opening there. He had accepted with little hesitation. He liked the country, he liked the people: he was unpatriotic enough to believe that they represented the brain of Europe. He realised, when he seized upon the chance of taking Jane for a holiday, that the fact of leaving her was his one regret. He had, with the making of the profane vow, ruled out women from any but casual recognitions; but in an idle hour he had once questioned himself as to what difference it might have made had he met so real and growing a thing in woman as Jane, at that period in his life when he had entered into numberless experiments among them. He felt suspiciously like deserting her at a critical period. He must warn her, he thought vaguely. Anyway he would give her the best holiday he could. He sent her ten pounds for new clothes.

Her mother and Phyllis filched her pleasure in the spending of it by the coldness of their suggestions, and by their refusal to allow her to buy them something out of it. They were critical about the things finally bought; and she packed them into a box with depression.

But she forgot all this in the excitement of the railway journey. It was the first one she had enjoyed; and was undertaken with pleasant leisureliness and lack of fuss; while she was constantly consulted as to what she liked best, or thought nicest, or considered comfortable. She looked at the porters at the great London terminus with envy, because in their constant work among travellers they were familiar with labels of enchanted naming: with boat trains and cabin trunks; with people whose eyes had known volcanoes, deserts, oceans and jungles.

Gallup said to her, "Ah, Jane! always ready to embark for the Golden Isles." And forebore to add that she would find them in no map. Temperamentally she appeared so fitted for such a discovery.

They arrived in the evening at a farmhouse which looked as though it had grown up as part of the sloping hollow in which it lay. About it swayed branches of roses and honeysuckle; the unfenced garden was crowded with colour and scent; opposite was an old disused stone quarry, along whose edge grasses stood against the blue. Two miles away the sea rushed in turbulently to a rocky bay, about which were a few fishers' cots.

It was a paradise to Jane, whose holidays hitherto had been spent in fashionable watering places.

There was no doubt he spoilt her ; until she began to glow with an effluence of youth. She was the various Iris ; his Nausic  a ; or more extravagantly *Om mani padme um* : Jewel in the flower of the lotus !

The September sun rode in continued splendour across the melting sea of blue and mauve above, and the translucent sea of jade and azure beneath. The inexhaustible flood of colour flowed in upon Jane's consciousness with a sense of inexpressible awed joy. Affection, praise and beauty, as indispensable to the finely tempered as to the child, quieted the apprehensive eyes and fortified the insecurity of her smile.

Jane was happy. Even the melancholy which the moon induced, rising over the disused quarry upon the flight of the white owls which had nested there, was a remote and splendid melancholy, which whelmed the universe in her personal nostalgia.

Small tyrannies were absent from the days. She marvelled to observe how at home Gallup was with living ; which perhaps gave him his easy air of authority. By comparison her mother appeared like someone constantly engaged with a book of etiquette.

The interest of his surprise in her was her companionableness ; there had been the doubt that under the strain of daily life together it might develop feminine extravagancies of conduct. He had prepared himself for that ; counting on his position, in relationship and age, to be free to rebuke her for such without committing himself to any scene ; as would have been inevitable with another female.

His natural or acquired indifference to the entanglements of those around him was continually broken into by her faith in his possession of a heart prompted by kindness. He was nearly urged to a vision of the Feminine constantly recreating the virtues of humanity by its demand of faith upon them.

They went for walking expeditions ; and fished in a brawling stream, where all the pleasure was for the casting of the fly, for trout were hard to get and small when caught. They lunched in bowery dells to his constant grunts of appreciation : " Ah ! this is better than Ludgate Hill ! Shall we stay here forever, my Ariadne of the Stars ? Ah !

Never get married, Sancta Simplicitas: remember our compact!"

She, forgetting for the moment those Sonnets from the Portuguese, and basking in the rare experience of appreciation, said with the fervency of adolescence: "It would be lovely to keep house for you forever."

"Forever!" Well, he would not remind her that man is as grass. Instead he made himself more comfortable against the beech tree where he leaned, and conjectured with what kind of sensual Philistine she was destined to set up house-keeping. One, probably, with nothing in his measure of things fit to reckon her by; and the recollection of other vastly different women to blot out what little sight he might have had of her. The relation of the sexes, which he accepted with a kind of tolerant contempt, depressed him at the moment. He pushed back his hair with an irritable gesture, as though he pushed back some obscuring shadow of obscenity that he could not tolerate here.

"What are you doing, Jane? Whatever it is leave off and talk to me."

She waved a paper at him, and sidling towards him put it in his hand.

He read aloud:

"It was a feckless Oubit,
Who stayed by Devon's tide,
He wore a hat with streamers,
He ate his troutlets fried.
He had an outwards tummy,
And lots of things beside.

"It was a wrinkled Oubit
Whose bumptious nose was red
To match the spotted troutlets
On which he oft had fed;
And when he could not catch them
Oh! D . . . and H . . . he said!

"This wicked, rotund Oubit
Had neither grace nor shame;
He loved not law or church bell,
Or ought of holy fame.
He walked a shameless Oubit,
And Jimmy was his name."

His holiday mood was restored. "Flippant scaramouch," he cried. "I will not elope with you again. Instead of

presenting me with odes of sentiment like any female of nice feeling, you perpetrate an indecorous outrage like this."

"You *are* rotund. No one ought to be the wrong shape to roll down a bank of daisies."

"I have no wish to."

"Then you are a degenerate man."

"I am, Jane."

"Don't attempt to become a minor poet," he warned her presently. "Women can't write poetry. They've no sense of form."

"The Sonnets from the Portuguese," she flashed back at him. At this period of her life they represented to her the achieved utterance of the heart's desire.

"You probably haven't a Robert Browning waiting to give you the material for a similar accomplishment."

The visible wilting of her before such onslaughts as he felt constrained to make upon her expectations, encouraged him to believe that she would be led to accept—as she must, for her own peace—the average lot. At times she suggested something in the nature of a revolution; which he prayed might be deferred during his lifetime. In spite of her sensibility she appeared as no meek blank document to be written upon as man and convention decreed. "There would be the devil to pay," he concluded. "Yet when he *was* paid—off—it might be the biggest push that civilisation had yet received."

He said to her later, "Man's present attitude towards the Garden of Eden story is beginning to be apologetic. It is up to women to prove him more wrong than he has begun to suspect. You've got to be big enough to accept the apology honourably."

"Yes," she murmured vaguely; the moon had been playing its old tricks with her youth.

"Go to bed, child, go to bed. What I mean is don't forget to become what you really are."

She took her candle and went up the narrow stairs. "To become what she really was"—it sounded a hard saying. But all things seemed possible in the stillness of the autumn night.

In the early morning she walked to the cove to watch the fishers lay out their nets to dry; and was back before he was ready for breakfast.

"Lazy bones!" she greeted him. "I've been watching the fishers. They work so hard, but look so still and content."

" Why not ? "

" People don't seem to enjoy their work in town."

He finished a large grilled haddock in his headlong way, then said : " The world of these people is still the world of the ancients. A fish to them is a thing concerned with life and death. In towns we have lost the first truth of things by applying a common denomination to all of them—money."

" Are we bound to ? "

" The bondage is universal. You are young and can attempt to break it. I am past reform ; and am merely a sign-post by the way, irretrievably rooted to my square of earth ; though I attempt on occasion to point out the various routes to you."

He congratulated himself on having done this pretty thoroughly during the holiday. He had not always waited for her to ask questions, he had, instead, offered explicit sundry conclusions—he hoped for her ultimate benefit—which sometimes, he was amused to acknowledge, were more like those she might be supposed to arrive at than he. He was becoming, under her demand for truth, as garrulous as any old woman. After all, he concluded, he could not lay claim to the detached silence of the Ancients. He belonged to a talking age. The communities of men were far distant from that centre of equilibrium where the silence of man might be a silence of wisdom. The men who were silent were mostly cowards, suffering from mental and moral inertia ; for the emission of gas was inevitable from the troubled crater of social revolutions and reforms.

He was reminded that their last day was nearing, and that he would have to tell her that the sign-post would be removed for some time. He put off that telling until a late hour.

" Let me see, you'll be twenty-one in about four years' time," he began. They had packed their boxes and were sitting in the bay, looking at the breakers beneath. " Don't think, because you may imagine that you will be grown-up, that you must inevitably get married. Life isn't like *bézique* ; there is no ' simple marriage ' in it. I'm obliged to you for finding me Joseph and his wife, because I had thought of marrying a housekeeper."

" A housekeeper ? "

" You didn't expect me to marry more than one ? "

She called him a stupid old thing. "Take my tip," he said. "To be stupid is to be content. Have you enjoyed your holiday?"

She gave him her hands. He pressed them briefly and released them. Then he said brusquely: "My firm want me to go abroad. It means money. Something towards our *château en Espagne*. I should probably be away about four years; and must be ready by end of October. I shall get home occasionally; so shall leave Joseph and his wife in charge of the house. There will be all my books for you to go at. . . . Well?"

Sudden tears were on her lashes. She lifted her cheek for him to kiss.

Instead he put a hand round her chin and framed her face for consideration.

"I once vowed not to kiss a woman again. I don't know whether my conscience— Very well—your forehead . . . Now, child, we won't be sentimental over parting. Keep your tears for the ending of a better holiday than this. We'll go and buy a large jar of cream to take back. Come."

They walked back, she hanging on his arm to gain courage from his determined stride.

10.

"Men have sought, and in large measure have succeeded, in taming the immanent divinity. . . . They have striven to mould, and even to break the human spirit, in order that it may obey their codes, and adapt itself to their institutions."

H. Bryan Binns.

It was a muggy winter, and Jane drooped through it. Uncle Jim abhorred letter-writing. Phyllis was discontented and her mother worried. Many hat boxes came to the house; but they seemed slow in achieving the expected result. Sometimes Jane was tempted to try the effect of that "Damn," but lacked spirit for the dynamic word.

When Spring came the old loneliness of the House of the Avenue of Roses was upon her. She missed Anthony Carmichael Wilson. His image, soft and unaffected by time, hung like a portrait in her thinking.

To "go at" the books in Uncle Jim's library appeared impossible. The daily small tyrannies of the badly-run and

pretentious little house swallowed up the hours. Again she was overcome by a sense of defeated struggle, and of the doom of things wrought to no purpose. Yet somewhere, she guessed, with a profound overclouding of spirit at her own fate, big issues were at stake, and great destinies moved irrevocably forward.

In a mood of petulance she surmounted the things in the drawing-room each with a d'oyley: the terra-cotta bust of Beethoven, the fussy gilt clock, the photo frames, the silver candlesticks.

"What have you been doing, Jane?"

"We never hear Beethoven. We never have any time except for d'oyley things—they smother everything. So there they are!"

Phyllis shot her an acid glance and collected the d'oyleys.

Jane left the room on the verge of tears. "I haven't even any courage," she thought desperately, and reached her room under a sense of blinding isolation.

Irrked, past endurance, by galling bonds, she was led to remember the Emperors of Ancient China, who once worshipped Wisdom in the purity of dawn. What was there for her of worship in the strangled unmemorable devices by which the hours of each day were conquered? There were no temples of contemplation. The speed of each day's activities was for strained and distrustful occasions of intercourse: what to wear, what to eat, and what show to make, the everlasting preoccupations.

No chances sought for the Soul to seek and express its gladness. The very children tied down to tyrannies of clothes and taught gibbering politenesses of speech.

As she sat there in youthful misery, scourged by the futility of such a pretence of Life—her inability to do aught but endure it—she must have proved an object of profound stupefaction to any pale spirits not yet released from the near precincts of the earth where they had laboured, to realise that in the eyes of youth the world which the nineteenth century had built up with such pride of labour, such sacrifice of beauty, happiness and lives: the great machine-ridden, money-scheming, complacent nineteenth century England, was a land not desired by those for whom it was engineered.

They looked upon it with incredulity, asking the old question: "If thy son shall ask for bread, wilt thou give him a stone?"

PART III
JANE AND ROMANCE

" Our hearts were drunk with a beauty
Our eyes could never see."

George Russell.

1.

HER sister's engagement to the corpulent lover, with the final disappearance of the recalcitrant one, though dealing another shrewd blow at the defences reared about Romance, failed to destroy her faith in some supreme hour of life, which would break one day upon the unreality of her doings with the transcendent truth of dreams. Jane was eighteen ; and knew of no reason why she should take other people's experiences as any measure of those likely to be her own. She was aware, too, of Charles Needham's astonishment at his new relationships of lover, son, and brother-in-law.

He would wink at her with a half-amused acknowledgment of her view of the situation.

"Never take a third glass of whisky, kiddy. The first is comforting, the second exhilarating, the third the deuce."

In amorous moods he was consoled by the reflection that it was time he settled down ; in cooler ones he deplored the third glass which he blamed for landing him with an expensive woman to house. His love letters were short and infrequent, and appeared to be written, perhaps unconsciously, from the standpoint of a possible breach of promise action. His education had taught him that prudence is the pre-eminent virtue ; a quality by which he was led to choose his collars, being satisfied that it did not matter what a man believes so long as his clothes are right. He had left Oxford without suspecting a flaw in this argument ; impressed as a fresher with the fate of a man who, wearing a wrong hat, had it seized and filled with squish and hung in a college quad.

Before the crudity of this marriage venture Jane, like the Lady of Shalot, shielded herself by regarding it as in a mirror, where it passed illusory across the shining surface of her dreams ; from which mirror she dared not turn a direct gaze lest a curse, too, should fall upon her. She withdrew deeper and deeper into a world peopled by phantasy ; moving about the house as though not of it, though caught in its enmeshing

machinery. She passed swiftly, as though meditating escape ; clasping in her hand a book, to be reared against ornaments under the pale cloud of silver-cleaning powder, or propped against dishes while unhastening saucepans performed their work ; or opened on window-sills while the dust from carpets settled. Her mind, which had learnt a habit of detachment in early days of the House of the Avenue of Roses, moved easily from the physical concentration of work to the pure abstraction of dreams ; while a love of order enabled her to find pleasure in getting things finished, and finding them well done.

She moved, almost a dream to herself—so determined not to be identified with the experiences around her—across two years of time. She might be accounted happy as she gazed into her mirror for the hour of release. Somewhere it lingered, where thought lost itself by halcyon seas soft-bosomed for strange birds' nests ; or upon the path of worlds beyond the range of sight ; or in that heaven of beatitudes which only saints encompass.

As for "falling in love," her scorn dealt searchingly with the phrase. One climbs to great adventures. When she encountered the term "free love" she marvelled. Could Love be anything but free ? Was it not as a great sea which only the arrogance of man might look upon as bound, because he has set frail harbours on its borders, in order that his boats may find a passing security ?

In her constant struggle to reach the meaning of things, perhaps it was revealed to her that the inevitable facts of existence do not offer security, they offer truth.

She read the great love stories of the world and wept to find them tragedies. Yet were there mighty words of consolation : many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.

Meanwhile Phyllis was engaged : an oppressive reality, accompanied by gigglings, more dressmaking than ever, astonishing deceits, light quarrellings and light reconciliations.

During the first winter of their engagement she went with them to a performance of *The Ring*.

Phyllis' year abroad had provided her with easy jargon about music. "The English are so stupid ; they know nothing about music. I should love a box at the opera this

season ; and really it is almost a duty to take one," she urged her betrothed.

He was easily persuaded, considering it as one of the things one does. If he were bored it was easy from a box to prolong intervals. He found that evenings at The Cot induced gaping ; and now that he was fairly landed looked forward to being married, when he would not feel so tied to a wife as to a fiancée.

"We will take Jane with us. Mother will prefer it, as we shall have to come home by the last train."

Jane stared at Needham's glance of proprietary humour as he answered, "Oh ! all right. Jane and I are good friends, aren't we ? Although you look at me sometimes as if I were some unholy nightmare."

She coloured. The word nightmare was close to her sense of the situation.

The first day of the Wagner performances, which were to begin with Lohengrin, and to be followed by The Ring, was a tiring one. Phyllis was finishing a new dress.

"Just come and try how this sash goes once more, Jane. There ! It is all wrong. You might unpick it for me while I finish the sleeves. I shall never be ready. Did you order the cab ? You might make some little thing and leave ready for mother to eat ; that girl in the kitchen is such a fool."

At last Jane found herself passing up the staircase of Covent Garden marvelling at the stir and splendour. People who appeared quite at home passed her ; women with bare shoulders, and men with faces which looked as if they could never have been children ; faces bold and red and hard. One on a landing looked different ; kind and preoccupied. He appeared to smile at Jane, and she smiled back at him. "He understands," she thought. What ? She did not ask herself. Behind her Charles whispered at Phyllis' ear, "Rum blighter."

They were shown into a small box from which the opposing tiers showed in a light veil of distance. Below, women arrogant of beauty swept to their seats, attended by men arrogant of wealth. The house was as a vast display of fashion ; and the gallery and amphitheatre were too far away for her to see the expectant face of the Wagner worshipper. No hint reached her of the tumultuous genius which was soon to prevail with that glittering crowd.

The lights went down amid a suppressed murmur and rustle. She heard Charles say : " There was a man at Magdalen, nuts on music, who used to say Wagner didn't get there. Good-looking woman in the next box."

From the back of the house came murmured " Hush-sh—" to late comers.

Across the restless, perfumed darkness quivered a long suspiration of sound—the prelude to Lohengrin.

Jane caught her breath ; and sat as one translated from present environment and experience. The flood of the music caught and bore her away to some parapet of the world, where in the Eternal Memory of Time the great dramas of life are unendingly reacted.

Quivering and spell-bound she leaned over the edge of the box.

Charles nudged his betrothed ; who simpered " Funny kid." But Jane was beyond the reach of human whispers.

When the red curtains with a slow stir descended upon the first act, and the orchestra laid aside their instruments, and men and women turned to each other again, she awoke to sight of them with a shiver of disbelief.

" He might cut it a bit shorter," Needham was saying ; " I've got an awful thirst on."

In the next act Phyllis became noticeably restless ; Jane was conscious of whisperings sometimes breaking into smothered laughs. They jested in a bridal scene which left her pale.

As the swan appeared for Lohengrin's farewell, she heard Charles say : " Let's clear out now ; here's this bally old duck again."

He met Jane's eyes, and muttered, " All right, see it out. There's plenty of time for the train."

" Oh ! *thank you !*" she said, catching at his arm on the way out, and turning eyes of glowing bewilderment on him. " I didn't know——"

" You are an intense youngster," he said ; and thought to himself that she would be worth making love to some day.

There followed the days of *The Ring*, and *Tristan and Isolde*.

Jane moved in a world intelligible and thinkable : a world which entered without difficulty the luminous ignorances of her mind, and the fine dreams of poets. Covent Garden

became for her a materialized heaven, where heroes walked shining and magnificent ; lovers met in sacred embraces and death was triumphant to a thundering rush of sound, or borne on strings to a heaven so piercing sweet as scarcely to be borne.

Again she was made aware that love keeps step with death and sorrow.

Terrible things, too, loomed darkly through the scenes, and her spirit shuddered with the music ; and out and beyond the haunted storm of melody, to some stiller perfection of resolved harmony, with the Spirit unpossessed that accompanied her ways, and was, at long last, to bring her to the Place of Illumination.

She tried to write a letter to Gallup telling him of this, but found the task an impossible one.

The experience set her farther than ever into a world remote from the actual ; and strengthened her demand of life for this adventure of Love before she could awake to the sense of having a living part to play herself. All other avenues of romance were shut down inexorably. Love was the allowed exception. Her frustrated impulses reared golden structures about it ; the promised refuge from a doom of sterility and colourlessness. More women than she have bargained thus : none perhaps with a clearer perception, for all her ignorance, of the world well-lost if this be gained. She apprehended Love as exalted comradeship. How much to gain in the solitary paths of being ! And motherhood—the mystic, unbelievable miracle of existence.

The months went on to the lengths of innumerable stitchings ; the dozens required by the prospective bride. Jane did seams, rebelliously.

"It's the only thing you can do," Phyllis said ungraciously.

"I won't waste my time over them again, ever," said Jane.

"Perhaps you won't get the chance."

Jane's head bent lower over the length of calico.

"A funny sort of wife you'd make," went on Phyllis, whose irritability increased as the wedding day drew near.

"No funnier than you," retorted Jane hotly, as she hurried out of the room.

She wrung her hands as she went.

"I haven't even the sense to hold my tongue," she thought miserably ; and was conscious that to demand a great adventure is to be constantly reminded of lack of fitness for it.

A gleam of light showed to her thinking as she remembered Gallup would soon be on his way home. "Someone to talk to at last," she thought. Her mother and sister became deeper immersed in plans for new garments and plans for the new home. They judged her indifferent, and probably envious as to these arrangements.

Gallup had written her: "Nothing would induce me to attend this wedding save my sense of responsibility towards you." She was free to read what meaning she liked into that.

She consulted with Joseph and his wife as to arrangements for the master's home-coming. The couple were flustered, and glad of advice. Joseph, product of a national school where he had received no training to fit him for responsibility, was relieved at his master's return; but his wife was disturbed before the prospect of renewed cooking.

"He's sure to want a lot of new fan-dangle things," she said. "I've heard foreigners don't ever have a bit of good wholesome meat."

"There you are, like a woman, counting your troubles afore they come! I hold a man's is the best way; to pretend not to see 'em wen they are there."

"And how's the needle-work getting on, Miss Jane? I've got two petticoats here ready to go back. I can't see why she wants such a lot made though."

"It is cheaper than getting them ready-made, Pollie."

"But her young gentleman has plenty of money, after all, Miss Jane."

"Oh! but he——" began Jane.

Joseph winked at his wife. "I say, do you remember those things I bought you? Very pretty they was, too, and cost a tidy bit of money."

Jane caught the wink, and Pollie's pretended scorn of him; and became aware of a new and homely measure of love, not to be reckoned in rushing tumult of sound, or fitted into pulsing rhymes; nevertheless sweet and wholesome.

2.

When Gallup returned to his polished and white-curtained house his first words were, "'Pon my soul, it might belong to a spinster!" His previous housekeeper had had little time for beautifying the house, having her wedding garments to

prepare, and a man other than her master to keep in countenance.

He threw a parcel at Mrs. Cane which contained a marvellous cashmere shawl, with the remark that if it was any good to her she could hold her tongue. She endeavoured to express her gratitude in the preparation of dinner, while Joseph put all the feeling he could contrive into the handling of dishes.

"How is Miss Jane?"

"My wife thinks her looking delicut, sir. It's nothing but makin' of clothes with Miss Phyllis getting married. It seems to us, sir, beggin' your pardon, that as she is marrying a well-to-do gentleman, it seems a pity to be layin' in such a lot. One never knows wot will happen for one thing; and if she did run a bit short he could afford to buy her more."

"A sane view, Joseph; but you don't expect women to be sane."

"He 'as got a down on women," said Joseph to his wife. "I expect some Jezebel got hold of him once, and he ain't ever forgiven her."

"Men should have more sense," replied she tartly. Her tongue could be as ill-natured as other women's towards her sex, but the current of feminist thought, gaining headway, had touched her to the extent of not allowing it from a man.

Gallup refused to give the bride away. He spluttered and blustered; he hated all ceremonies; he hated marriage; he hated a fuss. He wondered women allowed themselves to be dealt with as commodities, and given away like a pound of tea.

On the wedding day he stood in a pew irascible and defiant, with a grim acknowledgment of his sister's art in successfully engineering the marriage. The bridegroom was as satisfactory to look upon as a show ox; he had the beefy physical quality which accompanies large meals and exiguous mental efforts; gout and dyspepsia might follow one day, but at the moment he was impressive of health and stability. Phyllis wore with complacency a wedding dress tricked out in the latest devices.

Gallup could make nothing of Jane's face as the service progressed. She appeared to have set it in a kind of soft blankness.

A tent had been put on the lawn of The Cot; visitors stood packed in it getting refreshments. There were sandwiches, and numberless unnameable edibles, tortured into

extraordinary shapes and mixed together with poisonous ingenuity. Men laughed and drank champagne, and women smiled artificially to cover the perturbation which stirs every woman's heart for a bride. Gallup was engaged in trying to escape.

Jane hovered near him as often as she could.

"I suppose you've learnt to think yourself good-looking in my absence?"

"I——" she stopped, and remembered the night when she had bound the yellow ribbon round her hair.

"You must learn to prevaricate, Sancta Simplicitas, or you will get a reputation for untruthfulness."

Somebody called her and she left him. Other looks followed her besides his; kindly looks, too, sensible that innocence and beauty find little security in this knock-about world, and not wishing to ruffle their complacent good-nature with any anticipation of the tragedy of high hopes; preferring to accept life without them, and take their tragedies by way of an evening's amusement.

The small house and garden looked cheap and disillusioned after the guests left. There was litter about of faded flowers, soiled plates, and empty champagne bottles.

Jane was seized with a horror of the publicity. "It ought to be a secret," she said to herself vehemently; with the shadow of a like impious day for herself upon her dream of things.

She was unable to get to see Gallup until the following day, and then was asked to wait in the garden until he should come down. She supposed his mood was still irascible.

He watched her from a window for some minutes, trying to fix a term to some alteration in her, other than might be chargeable to the fact that her hair was pinned up. Her face was less noticeably boyish; he fancied that the eyes did not lift on you so quickly; though that might have been due to the excitement of the wedding-day. He abandoned a fruitless dissection and went out to her.

"I thought you must be busy," she said.

"I was; but how can a man think when a woman is about?"

"Do you like my dress? I put it on again for you."

"I appreciate the honour. Nieces don't usually dress to please uncles."

"No—but you are not an ordinary uncle; your very nose——" Her laugh was the old unembarrassed one.

Yet he was aware of some transformation; a sense of acquired womanhood. Had any young dog talked of love to her? . . . Waves of light fell upon her; waves of a silent wind lifted the hair above her eyes. Of a sudden she recalled to him his youth, and a lost sense of the fury of living.

He spoke almost roughly. "Well, you've learnt to pin your hair up; perhaps you've also learnt that the world is a pretty concrete place, full of facts mostly unpleasant."

She looked over the flowers of the borders. "There is always beauty, which the world can't spoil."

"If you are going to be metaphysical——"

She reddened; and ignoring the derision in his words said, "I remembered your warning when I chose the dress; you see, it isn't braced up in the middle."

"I am afraid you are one of those women on whom warnings are wasted."

"I'm like you then, dear. You don't look as though you had spent your life listening to them."

"I'm not a woman."

"No," she breathed; as though dashed by the statement.

"As I think I told you yesterday, you are passably good-looking."

She recovered a smile and stuck a sun-flower in his coat. He was wearing the hat with streamers.

"For a truthful girl you possess a beguilingly crooked smile. Well—what do you think of this marriage?"

"Charles took me with Phyllis to hear Wagner."

It was no answer, but he gave a comprehensive "Ah." Then asked, "I suppose you, too, are looking forward to living in a villa and looking after a baby?"

He had put the question mercilessly; but under that vision of motherhood the youth of her face deepened to an inspiration.

"Perhaps you have not considered that there is a big price to pay for what men call love? An angel with a sword still turns every Adam and Eve out of Eden."

At that she remembered the profane vow; and slipped a hand within his arm with a pressure of sympathy and pity.

He half made a gesture as though to shake it off. "You

had to be cursed with romanticism with the parents you've had."

"Is mother romantic?" She conceived it easily of her father, despite a confusing manifestation. "Perhaps she is—in a way," she conceded. And added with spirit, "It is better than the curse of materialism."

"The price is heavier; and the nineteenth century should have taught you the value of driving a bargain if nothing else."

"With life?"

"Why not?"

"I have no taste for bargains."

"And the age offers no glory for martyrs: ignorance has bred them as well as fanaticism."

"What is it you want me not to do?" she asked.

"I shall be away for another two years. Don't do anything irretrievably rash in the interval."

She smiled with a serenity which brought to his memory a small cottage in the South of France, where he had spent an evening ten years ago with a man and woman who had demonstrated that it is possible to prove that the world may be well lost for love. He had registered it as the exception to prove a contrary law, in a society dependant upon the acclamations of the many, and on the tyrannies of a complex social life.

He waved such a contingency aside for the niece who had proved so strong a kinship with him as to move him to a sense of the need for interference with her future.

"We pay for our mistakes by youth, Jane. The biggest penalty of all."

She did not understand the losing of youth; she said, "Don't be a fussy old thing!"

"Ah! very likely I am becoming a doddering and elderly person, Sancta Simplicitas. But make me a promise: Decide no momentous thing without writing me first. And remember that the first fancy you take to some good-looking boy need not be miscalled love."

Her glance was petulant and flushed. Had she not listened to Tristan and Isolde? How should she mistake love?

"Come out with me on Saturday afternoon," he said.

"We will try the Queen's Hall."

He found her healthily flippant over dinner; and consciously

alive and alert as she hung about the twilight garden with him afterwards. Most of all he became aware of an intense expectant arrestment in her outlook, as though she were on the eve of some imminent expected hour.

"Looks like an explosion one day," he thought. "Nothing in her life hard enough for her to grip on to—nothing for mental tooth-cutting. Now, if she had been a boy—A bolt across the earth; mental exercise with brains of her own calibre; the rough hand of experience. As it was——" He looked across the rows of trim fences; was conscious of a welter of chattering futility, a bondage monotonous and interminable.

"Your mother was right; you should have been a boy," he said.

"What's the matter with me?" she asked lightly.

"There is too much of the saint and sinner in you. The world likes a downright sinner, it gives people a chance of feeling superior; and they agree in acclaiming saints—when they are dead. But you can't be an actual living being, holding to your right of testing good and evil, without upsetting everybody."

"Must I decide then to be a sinner or a saint?"

"A saint! For heaven's sake don't desert me, Jane."

She gave his arm a brief affectionate pressure and said good-night.

As she went home she wondered how much of a sinner she was. It was more than ever her desire to be "good." How was she to discover the way of goodness? She remembered that on the Temple of the Delphic Apollo was inscribed the words "Know Thyself." How did one attain to that knowledge?

Again the haunting visions of the life she beheld, as in a mirror darkly, suggested that Love would show her the path of active goodness, and discover to her her veiled identity. It would—it must—How other could she escape from the compromise, the hedging, the evasions, save with the waiting comrade of her dreams?

Gallup said to her on the morrow: "You've got to learn to live the ordinary decent life, you know."

"And if I can't feel it to be decent?"

"Life will probably tame you into accepting it," he said grimly.

At the visible shrinking of her from such doom he bustled round for a hat and stick. "Am I respectable enough for the Queen's Hall?"

"Respectable!" she flashed at him. "Is there no other virtue, then?"

"It has been the god of the nineteenth century. And the less sure human beings are of the infallibility of their gods the more bitterly they fight to uphold them."

They came in silence to the Hall, which was full of a conscientious audience, stirring restlessly under the unshaded wires of electric bulbs hung starkly in clusters.

"Unnecessary—stupid!" grumbled Gallup, whose eyes were stabbed by a cluster just above their heads. "Just like the English; they're so infernally proud of any material achievement, like the taming of electricity for lighting, that they determine to blind you in case you should fail to be impressed."

His attitude softened reluctantly under Handel's Largo, to the length of saying: "If the socialists build their heaven upon earth they should choose the Largo for their national anthem."

They laughed together, in anything but a respectable fashion, at the drummer's hair, as he attacked the drums with ferocity in the school-boyish riot of the Overture to Rienzi.

Again he was struck with her companionableness; and recalled with disquietude his nearing return abroad.

"Haven't you got any friends?" he asked abruptly.

"Friends? Not really; only you." She told him of a few experiments, sketching them lightly, yet with some effect of cruelty: "I *can't* sit holding a woman's hand in public, and looking like she looked," she ended up.

"And the other girl—the one you were to sketch with——"

"I took a chair that a man she knew brought me one night, at the parish hall, at some show that was crowded; and he stopped by me and we talked a little. The next morning I had a letter from her saying: 'You have gained a lover but lost a friend.'"

She smiled, shaking her head. The incident which had hurt her at the time, appeared now in its crude absurdity. She drew closer to him. "There don't seem to be friends," she said. "But I have you. And I can wait."

“What for?”

“Oh! Anything!” she murmured, with a veiling of eyes; and remembered a man called John, and wondered if she should tell Gallup of him. Perhaps she would make the attempt that evening.

But he went abroad without hearing.

His last words to his niece were: “It might be a wise precaution to invent a lover—suppose we call him Saunders—we’ll make him healthy, strong, and generous, and deck him out with the qualities you admire; then you can measure all men by him; and if they don’t come up to the Saunders standard don’t have anything to do with them!”

“You think me very stupid,” she cried.

“Necessarily, Jane, necessarily! Bred on dreams and ignorance. What do you think you are but a sure target for any blind marksman.”

At that he left her.

3.

“O World, be nobler for her sake!
If she but knew thee what thou art,
What wrongs are borne, what deeds are done
In thee, beneath thy daily sun,
Knowst thou not that her tender heart
For pain and very shame would break?
O World, be nobler, for her sake!”

Laurence Binyon.

She thought to herself that if health, strength and generosity were the qualities of an ideal lover then the young man John was something like Saunders. But she found it impossible to think of him as a lover, though it had been equally impossible to speak of him casually, because she had found him the most understandable person since Gallup had left. The fact that he was John betrayed that; casual people are identified by surnames. When he had suggested that his was an impossible one for her use, she had agreed readily, and had several times called him John to his face; to the immediate risk of his sanity. But she was not to know that.

John was a socialist; a title which gripped Jane with a glamour of splendid rebellion. He wore clothes upon which

her mother set a chilly stare. Nevertheless he, being well-made, cut a less sorry figure in them than others might. He wore them with immense satisfaction; being too young to have discovered that rebellion is more likely to be successful if its most obvious manifestations are evaded. To Jane Arrobus he was a figure of Romance. She listened, thrilled, to his brave heresies, and to his untameable laughter before the world's old and worn traditions. They talked through a long summer of the eternal problems which beat devastatingly upon the isolated islands of their existence.

Such discussion filled them with a sense of power, and of superiority over those young men and women who had no taste for such matter.

On one of their first encounters he had spoken freely of love as the woman's supreme art. He had assured her that after centuries of dishonour, and of barbarous rites and laws, love was coming into its own; and was claiming the freedom and dignity of all other arts, being indeed the greatest, even the Art of Life. Her ardent glow upon him at this had the effect of silencing his eloquence.

The first fear he had known laid hold of the young man John, as he saw his fine abstraction shaping into form before his eyes.

She did not notice his confusion. The idea of love as a great progressive art had not entered the dim harbour places of her dreams and desires, where she sheltered herself from amazing laughs and whisperings.

She met John whenever she could escape on Saturdays from the croquet parties; which her mother and sister said they arranged for her benefit. Their meeting place was a little spinney, where the air was green under the thick interlacing of young growths, and there were no human sounds.

That they met in secret pleased Jane. Her mother's word for it later was deceitful. Jane did not feel deceitful; she only felt a blessed sense of thankfulness to be able to meet a man apart from the innuendoes, sly looks and unaccountable embarrassments which surrounded men at the croquet parties.

John went to the spinney even if she did not come, and spent the time in wondering if he should find courage to tell her one day all that it was in her power to achieve. His eloquence lacked no words as he sat alone in the green silence

and the sap of life just risen in his own being. Then he would tell her that it was the woman's destiny to fashion human souls ; to transform the earth, with its burden of materialism and civilisation, into a new garden of Eden, where a man might walk with cleansed feet seeking God. That all arts must subserve hers, because it was hers to mould, not immobile matter, but humanity into beauty.

Sometimes, with a gesture of despair, he would put aside such thoughts before a realisation of the impassable barrier of her ignorance. He was prepared to believe it as profound as the ignorance of a child. Could he brace himself to be cruel to her one day, to the extent of enlightening her to some recognition of the real world in which he walked himself ? A wild thought took him further, and suggested that a savage embrace from himself—which would mean leaving her for ever—might provide a sharp awakening, and perhaps save her years of disillusionment if not of tragedy. . . .

Thus thinking he came upon her, unbelievably there before him. Her face of pleasure brought the colour to his. He stammered a greeting, and forgot all plans as to rude awakenings ; rather he felt that he would have challenged the whole world with his undefended body to save her the slightest discomfiture.

"Have you been here long ?"

"About an hour."

"What have you been doing ?"

"Dreaming."

"May I know ?"

"I was thinking of our old home, and wondering if the drive were really as long as I used to think it ; and the rose trees as tall and straight." She drew an enchanted garden for him : its lawns measured by a table known only to children ; its shadows more terrible than any darkness known of grown-ups ; its glories the very secrets of heaven.

As he listened he felt the same shadowy sense about her as she drew around the garden ; moreover, unaccountably, some presentiment of doom, before which he clenched his hands.

"Do you see it ?" she asked.

He answered "Yes." But what he really saw, so intensely that it made all other sight impossible, was the manner of her as she sat among the grasses, slim and swaying as though

with them. He set his eyes away, and his fingers made havoc with a hundred growths, loosing the scent of the earth.

"Go on," he muttered.

With a half-blind intuition of some trouble in his silence, she told him of the fears that had come to her in the garden, and of how she still laboured under the oppression of infinity and eternity.

"Perhaps we ought to get rid of the sense of eternity," he said, with a desperate effort to balance his thinking. "It is only our farthest guess of time; and we belong, don't we, to the spirit matter which endures? An enduring circle of life." He dwelt on the phrase. "You know the ancient mystic symbol of matter, Ontoborus the Tail Devourer? He is a serpent coiled, devouring his own tail, and bearing the inscription, 'The whole is one.' It seems a true symbol. . . . We used to be told that the world would become like the moon, a burnt-out globe, but, with the discovery of radium in the earth rocks, it is just as conceivable that it may once more take the form of primeval fire mist: there you have the ancient symbol of the circle illustrated again."

He drew comfort from that circle which bound her, whether she willed or not, within the same circumference as he. Their young eyes drew together as though in protest against their brief life span; and something of the during glory of immortals passed over the shining of their youth.

Near them a thrush hopped, listening to inaudible sounds.

He laughed shortly. "That chap is bulging with worms; simple digestive things, unable to produce a dyspeptic bird."

She told him of the absurdities of the sparrows under her eaves. He said he would look at them with her eyes next time; which necessitated a glance to make sure how they would look. Nevertheless he knew he would fail miserably to conjure them up. "It is what looks out of them," he thought; and again made ravages upon the green things in his grasp.

The sparrows brought to her remembrance Anthony Carmichael Wilson. She spoke of him. Her tenderness made him absurdly jealous; so that he laughed rather wildly at the simple recollection.

This emphasised her sense of men as strange beings, not

of the same humanity as women ; to be dealt with in sounding titles of hero, fighter, knight ; or at nearest a worn battler like her father, labouring vainly to get blood from a stone.

This sense of a barrier, in spite of her frankness, presaged in advance a leap across a very chasm, if the day should come when she chose to study one familiarly near, as husband.

Again the young man John foresaw an awakening other than any of which she dreamed ; and which had the effect for him of the seeming wreckage of his own brave schemes ; the universe appeared to darken under this foreshadowed eclipse of hers.

He said to her, " Won't you see that it is only in books that princes waken sleeping princesses ? " The fantastic words, with the half-conjured figure of himself as a wakening prince, brought the colour to his face. He looked with distaste upon his brown suit, and large ill-made boots, shamefully belying the symmetry of his feet.

She was not altogether blind to his homage and humility. She plucked a faint mauve-veined flower from the grass and held it out to him.

He received it on his open palm ; he feared her touch. He had decided he was not the man to attempt to administer that disillusioning awakening which he foresaw ; and which a touch from her, too kindly given, might have precipitated.

He placed the flower within a book which he drew from his pocket.

She saw that on the cover was written " An Anthology of Love " ; and was moved to a fugitive blush. Nevertheless he was but vaguely realisable to her, groping as she was among a mass of prejudices, conventions and distortions ; and relying on some transcendent hour to flood with illumination a darkness which she feared to explore herself. Her sensitiveness, alive though it was, failed to measure the suffering of the young man John.

He, that night, set himself to face all that her young indifference meant. When at last he fell asleep, upon a dawn singularly clear and unimpressive, he left behind him the first exuberance of youth. He never again took the same pleasure in the socialistic clothes, neither in the brave heresies of his mind ; though he adhered to both, with some modifications.

He went out to a post abroad in the autumn ; retaining

enough of faith to believe that though all one's own lights fail, though they go out one by one, yet surely light prevails.

He said good-bye to her in the spinney where the air was faint with the faintness of dying woods. In after years when he smelt that same moist penetrating scent he remembered that he had once been a youth ; and that Woman is the idol of youth, whether for gain or loss, for salvation or perdition.

"I shall not be returning," he said to her ; and gazed with a sudden despair upon her face.

She fluttered her hands before it ; and he took the small sweet things and kissed them.

At his going she wondered for a brief moment whether he might have been "Saunders." But he had gone and left her, so that could not be.

4.

The Blind Marksman aims again.

Jane Arrobus' life thus took toll of the life of the young man John ; for thus we weave the strange tapestry which is our being ; drawing shining threads from out another's woof, leaving their's duller forever. The design always so much a design of sacrifice, and worked in such apparent confusion to the end of a great Designer.

She tried to compensate herself for the loss of John by more strenuous reading. There was no time to spend in Gallup's library as he had suggested, but she fetched away books and read them at home, mostly at night.

Her mother's demands grew more exacting : the restless existence which had never possessed the strength to lose itself in any experience of value, had reached a fretful middle-age, given over to repinings and the petty animosities of a nature continually goaded into irritation by intense self-love. Jane served her with a dog-like submission to her whims and caprices ; and escaped at night to the little room where the square of night showed like her limited life ; outside of which were eternal harmony and silence. If she could not share them at least they were without.

At hand was the sleeping line of villas ; so intimate and home-like of effect, yet always recalling Gallup's summing-up of them : "Dolls' houses ! Dolls' houses ! Badly managed,

full of discontent, and with children growing up in them stupidly fed and ridiculously clothed. You women are not trained for your job."

It was true enough, Jane thought; depressed under the yoke of petty and sometimes malicious small tyrannies. Where motherhood is the outcome of an instinct not fortified by responsible thought, it easily takes upon itself the animal characteristics of parenthood, sacrificing its own without compunction.

"You can't very well go out, with the house dusty from top to bottom, Jane. I think you will have to give that girl notice. Can you run down to Phyllis this evening and see if she matched that pattern?"

No moment of the day was free. Sometimes her mother called her a good child, and said she must not get married.

Jane did not think of marriage, she only thought of love.

Sometimes, from out the books she borrowed, sentences leaped which lit up human existence as with a flash; even though they rendered daily tyrannies more incomprehensible. . . .

"The understanding does not derive its laws from nature but prescribes them to nature." Before the audacity of that she seemed to join in elemental laughter. From another she read: "We have made our God not in the image of the artist who works for work's sake, but in that of the artisan or man of affairs—we ask 'What is he going to make of it all?' Perhaps the universe is only his eternal keyboard, his eternal canvas."

At that the very song of the universe surged in her ears; and she would walk down dusty pathways to her shopping drunk with the first ecstasy of understanding.

Such moments were rare; for the handicaps were heavy for a soul so perilously fashioned.

She gathered no sour fruit of the tree of knowledge in her rambles through books. She recognised but one tree of life, and that was set in the Paradise of God: an image beyond the actuality of speech. . . .

Through the winter Charles and Phyllis were frequent visitors. Phyllis smart and important, Charles often sleepy and bored. He was no talker, only being interested in two topics—money and food. In light moods he talked of food, expansively; in serious moods of money, secretively. Like

animals at the Zoo he was drowsily content after meals, and restless before. It amused him to tease Jane.

"Want to live five thousand years, Jane! Great Scot! Why you've learnt all there is to know by the time you are thirty; and there is plenty of opportunity to kill time between that and seventy."

"All there is to know?" repeated Jane.

"Of course," said Charles; with an amused eye half-closed on his wife, who giggled.

Jane blushed, she did not know why.

He waved a song at her from the piano. There was a quality in her which stirred him like the ringing of church bells, to some indefinite lost apprehension of his youth. "Come and play this, and let me see if you have been practising," he said.

Jane owed music lessons to Charles. She learnt from a man he had known at Oxford, who was making an attempt to live on an income of fifty pounds and a rent-free cottage, allowed him, as organist, by a wealthy congregation, and eked out by spasmodic fees from giving lessons in pianoforte and organ playing.

Charles was given to small familiarities at the piano; pinching her ear, stroking her hair, or putting a hand on her shoulder. This had the effect of drawing from his wife tart remarks.

"Why can't you tidy your hair for the evening, if you must go about with it like that in the day, Jane? Haven't you got a neater skirt than that? Where is the tray-cloth I worked, you don't seem to use it?"

Sometimes Charles lazily remonstrated. "Leave the child alone, Phil. It will be enough for her to start getting old and vinegary about jee-jaws when she's got a house of her own."

"You're the last man to talk like that," retorted his wife; "when you know you can't stand anything the least bit out in your own home."

"That's all right. But Jane is only a child."

"She'll soon be nineteen."

Jane drew a song forward. She liked playing accompaniments, especially of love songs; and pleased Charles by her consciousness of the subsidiary part of accompanying. His light voice struggled to gain a hearing in his wife's more showy performances.

"You are getting on very well; Jones knows how to teach," he said.

Jane was afraid of the music master; who on his part had told his wife that Jane was "too good to be true." Mrs. Jones experienced no jealousy; she was too tired for dogmatic feelings, and was grateful for all his pupils.

Mr. Jones had developed a habit of placing his arm on the back of Jane's chair; from where sometimes it would drop unaccountably to her waist. In face of the unconsciousness of her eyes, he had not dared to emphasize its position by a pressure. Jane sat still and rigid. She endowed all artists with an esoteric quality of aloofness in their art; and, being assured the arm was there unwittingly, was afraid some movement of hers might betray its position, and cause him embarrassment.

Her growing attraction, which was presumably the cause of the unofficial position of Mr. Jones' arm, was a subject discussed by Mrs. Arrobus and Phyllis.

"There is something about her, I don't know what it is; for she is absolutely plain sometimes."

"Charles says Uncle James hit the nail on the head when he called her *Sancta Simplicitas*," remarked Phyllis, with a malicious emphasis on the title.

"She is like her uncle," sighed Susan; "unnatural in a lot of ways. It is so much worse in a woman."

"If she's born like it, it is no good worrying about it," said Phyllis, sharply commonsense.

"I thought I might send out cards for tennis twice a month this summer; the lawn is large enough for a single court, and men like it better than croquet."

"Yes, do, dear; I'll come and help. It looks as if you will get Jane off your hands as well as me!"

"I shan't stand in her way, of course; although it will leave me alone."

"We'll come and look you up more often. Charles is thinking of getting a car. Everybody is talking of them. There won't be any need for horses soon."

Jane wrote Gallup a fantastic report of herself as nicely brushed up and decorated on Saturday afternoons for serious consideration by the youth of the place. "There are some acidulated vestals invited as well," she added; and with one of her rare flashes on the mean aspect of things, wrote "They provide a foil."

The main contention of his answer was that when decorated she must not be caught : " The catching is a pleasant pastime, but the caging is damnably cramped. (Don't leave this about, I can't erase.) Beware of *idola domas* ; they lead to sensual respectability. You'll find the term in one of my books. Beware of labels : conventional virtue is our heritage of decent civilised feeling, and nothing to be proud of personally. A real virtue—I don't possess any—is, I take it, a quality for which one has made personal battle. If you must be decorated and brushed don't forfeit your name, Sancta Simplicitas. Nature is greater than civilisation ; don't exchange her enchantment for upholstered smartness decked with millinery abominations. You force me into being an inspector of your morals by writing me flippant letters ! "

Jane laughed out at the breakfast-table.

" Is your uncle so amusing then ? Can I see his letter ? " asked her mother.

" There is nothing really in it, mother. Shall I read——"

" I have no wish to hear, Jane, if there is anything to hide. Pass me the toast, please."

Jane passed it, flushing unhappily. She did not want to share the letter ; yet she knew that if she did not her mother would treat her as though she had been guilty of a heinous offence.

" Why can't she trust me ? " she thought rebelliously, as she carried the letter upstairs.

She had not yet guessed that her mother's deep-rooted suspiciousness was a thing of long growth ; an accretion beyond softening agencies.

A discomfiting day followed, but fortunately the morrow was a Saturday, when Jane knew her mother would relinquish the frigidity of her manner, and smile upon the young men who came to tennis ; and explain to the women how trying domestic life was in a small house with one servant. They would all think how sad and sweet she was, and after they were gone she would forget to be vexed.

In spite of her letter to Gallup she had begun to anticipate Saturday with a good deal of pleasure. Most of the young men who came were friends of Charles ; and he was careful to invite those whom he considered "very decent fellows."

Quite nice young men came who had no particular hold on life, but hoped it might somehow turn out a satisfactory

business. They were interested in Jane ; and wondered if she would inherit her mother's income. Some of them knew of Gallup, and considered there might be expectations there also. They decided that she was quite pretty ; and reminded each other that she wouldn't stand any nonsense from a fellow. Sometimes one of them would leave a stick or his racket behind as an excuse to call on some other evening, when he would have the field to himself. They were cautious men, aware of the necessity for not giving themselves away too soon.

They perplexed Jane. Sometimes she talked to them lightly ; sometimes with embarrassment, as before the taint of some aspect of life not realisable by her, and by which they sought to balance the monotony of their lives, passed in offices and at desks, bald enough of adventure or promise. Something, dimly, she was conscious of, some sinister struggle behind the accepted face of things.

These young men had found girls easy enough to kiss, and her aloofness, gentle as it was, roused their curiosity ; suggested, too, safety in the hazards of marriage. And she was intelligent : they were shy of the word clever when used of a woman. Not one of them would have owned to a preference for a clever wife : some one rather silly and dove-like, or, if they possessed more courage, bold and flirtatious, was in their minds.

She had episodes with some of them ; amazing enough to her apprehension. A scuffle once, with a young man who had wagered to get a kiss. Jane was surprised at her strength ; so was the young man, thrown back against a wall with the corner of a picture frame in his eye. A share of her lost reputation might be attributed to him as he vowed to have vengeance of " the little cat." But there were less humiliating encounters. Twice she was forced to the extreme of a refusal of marriage. In each case the suitor lost courage before a surprise so plainly unsimulated, and a distress beyond the aid of vanity.

" She's a regular little flirt," said Phyllis to Charles.

He smiled ambiguously, and suppressed a retort that it was her lack of such method which brought her attentions rendered conspicuous by the contemplation of marriage as their ultimate result. What else could these young men do ? He chuckled to find them brought up against so serious a conclusion by

Jane's faith in them. A faith inevitably doomed to a regrettable downfall, but which led them, of necessity, if they offered her anything to offer her all.

Not that she would have denied them friendship ; that was what she indeed had hoped from them ; but their training and outlook had precluded such a relationship from their consideration.

On a languorous afternoon, when the leanest and most coolly constituted had given up tennis for the shade of the trees, Charles, mopping his face, baited a man on the imminence of his marriage.

" Yes, I'm being run to earth," said the prospective bridegroom, with a depression perhaps partly due to the heat. He looked up to find Jane Arrobus' eyes on him. He shuffled the stones at his feet, and to disperse some sense of positive discomfort, added, " We've had our run, Charlie, old boy ! "

Jane was seized with a sense of bafflement ; of the worsting of high hopes ; of a chill of the spirit ; of the recognition of some profound ignorance enveloping her.

Looking up to see if she might escape she met the eyes of another man : eyes which regarded her with entire friendliness, singularly free of intention. They suggested the calm emptiness with which a child looks at us when we ask of what it thinks, and it replies, " Of nothing."

The man the eyes belonged to was Ernest Trask, spoken of by Charles as a good old sort. He was older than most of them, nearly thirty. He seldom joined in conversation except to say " Yes " or " No " ; and when anything amused him had a slow friendly smile. Jane recovered herself before those calm grey eyes. They betokened security and dissociation from agitations. She gave him a half smile ; and set about endowing him with qualities for which his silence gave a lead, by indicating that he did not find the chatter around interesting.

On parting he took her hand in a warm slow grasp, kindly and without emphasis.

" You will come again ? " she asked ; lifting an eager face upon him.

Trask forgot to leave hold of her hand. His eyes slowly kindled to expression. " Would you like me to ? " he asked, surprised.

" Yes, do."

He went out without bidding Mrs. Arrobus good-bye.

He came on four successive Saturdays.

Jane took an extra pleasure in doing her hair nicely, and in wearing a new white frock.

Trask, at the end of the month, when the moon was at the full, surprised his mother, who was a widow, by coming in late in the evenings and giving as an explanation that the nights were lovely. He had reached thirty years without staying out for such a reason, and she looked at him with anxiety.

"You are not doing anything you oughtn't to, Ernest?"

He answered, with some resentment, "No, I'm not."

They sat in an awkward silence.

She was a large woman, and moved and spoke with the lethargic lack of haste natural to many large animals. Her religion was what she had been taught at a Sunday School, when she was twelve; she had neither added to nor taken away from it. She read a daily paper and the parish magazine; she had no time or inclination for other reading. Her time was chiefly occupied with cooking; there were four meals, to each day, and each meal—this was a point of honour with her—had to be served with exactly the right kinds of assorted dishes and sauces; the kinds taught her by a housewifely mother, and added to as years went by. She welcomed a new recipe as others may welcome a new poet; regarding the stomach as the centre of human interests.

She had never realized that her son had become grown-up. He had lost his father when he was twelve; and when he left school she had felt it to be her duty to warn him as to the temptations befalling young men. She warned him against women, drink and debts. He thanked her, and assured her that she need not worry.

It was his wish to go through life quietly and without friction. As regards women he had been initiated into certain facts concerning possible relations with them at a very early age, and with a thoroughness and freedom of speech of which his mother had no idea, in the preparatory school to which he had gone. The process of "finding out about life" she had left him to struggle with, as with an abyss too deep for maternal guidance. Having come through as she hoped and prayed that he had, all right, she was glad to be free of the necessity for further warnings.

Ernest had never questioned her attitude. He floundered before new adjustments, or any sense of the need of them, and was a conservative by nature not by principle. He feared young women, whether shy or self-possessed. Yet now he sat there because of his mother's words, wondering why he felt so at home with Miss Jane Arrobus.

He would have liked to walk out again into the night, but his mother, large and impassive, barred the way. He said good-night to her and went to bed.

He undressed even more slowly than usual, and he was a slow man. He was flung up against an astonishing proposition, which he was bound to face. His mother's words had forced him to consider the meaning of that warm disturbance of his being which led him now to look upon Saturday as a kind of treat, a time to prepare for all the week. Having had no relations with women, save the most casual, the situation resolved itself into a question of extreme magnitude: "Did he wish to marry Miss Jane Arrobus?"

His confusion was overwhelming. He may be said never to have made a decision of any moment: his education had been settled for him; his business had been provided for him; he had been born into a religion. He had never questioned any of these arrangements.

He was an undisturbed sleeper, but he lost several hours of the night trying to resolve the disorder of his mind into some kind of decision. By the morning he decided that probably Miss Arrobus would never listen to his suit; he was a humble man.

But the idea prevailed; not as one with which he was brought into conflict, as a man who determines "*She shall be mine*"; but with the gleam of "*If only she would be mine I should be happy.*"

The God of his mother was a God personally responsible for the ordering of one's relationships and work: if these were adverse it was due to a chastening; if propitious, the smile of His blessing. Trask waited for a first move, if there was to be one, from the Almighty.

He became more at home with Miss Arrobus each time he met her. She made allowance for his slownesses, met his halting speech half-way; and if she scored off him, it was with such kindness and merriment that he enjoyed the process.

It was as though someone as unbelievable as the fairy

princess had walked out of his old nursery books into the garden of The Cot.

At all events Trask was not the sensual Philistine of Gallup's anticipation.

5.

She was sitting by him in the strip of wood where she had once played with Anthony. From a tennis court voices came, laughing, mocking. Sometimes a ball shot through the falling green of the larches and Trask rose in his leisurely way and threw it back. As he did so her eyes followed him. There was fear at her heart. Was he Saunders?

Her hands rested on the bench of the seat. As he sat down he put out his arm and placed a hand over hers. Jane hardly drew her breath; the voices from the lawn had become distant and unintelligible. After a long moment she got up and left him, moving entranced up the narrow path.

Trask hoped she was not offended; she had not appeared to be. Perhaps she had a headache. He joined the players on the lawn.

He did not see her again before he left. He said to her mother, "Please say good-bye to Miss Jane for me."

Susan did not miss the earnestness of his voice. She said in her gentlest tones, "Certainly; I don't know where she has popped off."

Meadows noticed for the first time how pretty-looking she was. He had no wish to go home. But his mother would be waiting to have supper with him, so he went.

Jane was in her bedroom. She sat away from the glass; afraid of the Self which dominated her feelings. Her incoherent thoughts whirled in a maze. She remembered Gallup and his warnings: he stood at the end of each beckoning path. But then, poor dear, he had never been in love. She sat staring at the floor.

But what she looked upon was the gate of the Splendid Adventure. It hung in amazing light, its keyhole a throbbing star. Should she stretch forth her hand and turn the lock?

It was Charles who came to fetch her down. He said, "Lord! Jane, you make me think of fairy stories. What did you run away from? Another proposal?"

"I have harmony to do before my music-lesson on Monday."

He took no notice of the words. "There's not one of the whole boiling worth marrying," he said.

She smiled. After all they appeared as suitable for marriage as he had. Why should she get nothing but warnings?

With indwelling eyes she went with him to make conversation at the table; whilst her conscious self tried to fit Saunders to mortal shape.

She left them at the first opportunity to lean out of the tiny casement, beyond which the night was gathering its innumerable multitude of worlds. They were very far away. But near her she heard the key turning in the lock of the secret adventure.

6

"Gravity is the mysterious appearance of the body which hides the defects of the mind."

La Rochefoucauld.

Men learn at school, and after in the world, a certain alertness which disguises even phenomenal imperceptivity. Also, they never lay claim to stupidity as something of an engaging quality; an attitude still held natural to women at the end of the nineteenth century.

Trask presented for Jane's impressions a blank sheet, upon which she wrote daily. By cautious stages he advanced upon that first hand clasp to an hour when he said: "Do you think that one day you could love me?"

Before asking this momentous question he had stammered out a few words to Mrs. Arrobus, who had met him sympathetically and with approval—she had ascertained that the business he had inherited from his father was of old standing and repute—and the sense of so amiable a mother-in-law encouraged his declaration.

They were standing in the farthest corner of the larch strip. Shadows crowded upon the trees; in the air was the first breath of autumn.

A tremendous sense of loneliness and incapacity seized her and kept her dumb. She longed wildly that Gallup should somehow burst in upon the incoherent scene; or that she

might go backwards to the time when she and Anthony played ball.

"I don't want to hurry you," he said; and stood away from her humbly; she was so much sweeter than any wife of whom he had thought.

She held out her hands, seeing him in need of comfort, and drenched as she was herself with a similar craving.

Gently, with some alarm, he took her into his arms, and kissed her above the eyes.

They became engaged.

The approximation of such widely diverse temperaments was generally approved by lookers-on. Susan Arrobus, with a sigh, expressed herself as satisfied. She had no term by which to fix that quality of her daughter's which had made of her a stranger. She said she was thankful that Trask was a good deal older, and steady.

"He's not likely to lift his boot-heel against her," Charles replied.

Phyllis, amiable in the possession of a motor-car, pulled his ear. "He doesn't seem to have much go in him. However that is Jane's outlook."

No one had the slightest idea what Jane's outlook was. Charles was the nearest in his guess. The disillusionment of his life had left him one reverence, and that was for innocence.

The spinsters of the neighbourhood lavished congratulations upon Jane. Perhaps Trask appeared to them too commonplace to provoke envy. The young men decided that her choice proved her less intelligent than they had imagined.

Mrs. Trask's congratulations to her son took the form of: "If you find you are suited to each other, then in God's good time perhaps you will be married."

She wore a slightly wronged air. He had described his betrothed as charming to her, when first the possibility of marriage had crossed the unreflecting path of his mind. His mother had sniffed. The charm of women was more open to suspicion than the charm of the moon. She connected it with actresses and such-like women. She was very definite in her estimation of things within her sphere, and very indefinite in the phrasing of anything without it. Actresses were to her an undifferentiated class, so were clergymen; the one practised all the errors of humanity, and the other all its virtues. Personality conveyed no meaning to her; she

looked with suspicion upon people who differed in any marked degree from the majority.

As for Trask, he was whirled, if so strong a method of progression may be used of him, from all his known moorings by the simple happiness of every day.

When he had thought of marriage in the past it had been as a hope that he would find an amiable wife to keep a home as his mother would wish, and to bring up his children to be well-behaved and healthy. The disturbing sensations which now flickered this sober vision left him in a condition of bewildered content.

He lost several orders in business ; being temperamentally unfitted to work out at the same time two such conflicting lines of conduct as love and commerce.

As for Jane—words are a poor coinage for youth and love and innocence, when these conspire together to fill the heavens with songs, and to invest with romance the habitations of earth.

Very closely she wove phantasmal garments about her, under the stress of some urgent need for protection . . .

Up and down the lane, and beyond it to the streets of London, the world, as man willed it, moved amazingly. Always the scurry and turmoil of men contending for money ; of restless erotic women squandering the money in a thousand devices of folly. Countless sects and societies, leagues and charities, attempting to combat a disease of which they feared to face the causes.

Civilisation was undoubtedly ill as it neared the beginning of another century.

Youth, which longed for health, played in ignorance for a few years of its existence upon sands towards which a cruel sea swept engulfing.

Perilous were the sands upon which Jane lingered ; surrounded by conspiracies of silence, and the ugly artificial intercurrent afforded by formal constrained gatherings, where she encountered stupid laughter, cruel and inane talk, and suspicious eyes.

As one nursing a small flame in a great darkness, she withdrew, within the circle of her dream, from the dismay without ; grateful to her lover for his kind slow smile on her, his acquiescence in her projected plans for the future.

She did not miss the lack of answering propositions from

him. So starved was she of human comradeship, and communion of ideas, that she was filled with gratitude for little kindnesses from him which she herself lavished with unconsidered generosity on those within her reach.

Over their relationship and the future she flung the glowing mantle of her visions, and endowed his being with the imaged splendour of a hero-lover.

This was hardly fair towards that so-quietly jogging and acquiescing man Ernest Trask ; who had been content to read of splendour and heroism in books, but who had never expected or desired that such qualities should touch his own life ; and who was incapable of realising that in the eager figure of his betrothed there were men who would have rediscovered the romance of an earlier age. So eager she was for truth, so desirous of rendering service, so formed for fidelity, so throbbingly alive behind the defensive shelter of her dreams . . .

No crude expression of emotion from Trask, no wild impulse of caress disturbed Jane's illusions. He guessed nothing of this deification of himself ; his humility was deep ; it was also ineffectual, suggesting no reason for a struggle towards any sort of pride, not even on her behalf. He clung to his few beliefs with an obstinacy which was the complementary quality of his lack of imagination.

Sometimes she felt a sense of relief when he left her.

In an endeavour to realise herself she constantly travelled back along the way of life, to find herself moving about the House of the Avenue of Roses ; or leaning out of the upper window while the moon swam out above the pine tops. There she would discover Anthony among the trees, looking for her. He did not see that she hung above in the window place, waiting.

Sometimes she was seized by unaccountable depression ; with a sense of walking a road blindfold.

Was Love then not strong enough to meet the laughter of the world, and provide a comradeship vital enough to be its own security ?

Such shadowing questions, hardly shaped to words, passed and formed again upon the background of her consciousness, as she stared out beyond the window at the square of night. A place of unbelievable worlds, or of beautiful blind things, or an impending doom—who could tell ? Sometimes she drew

the curtains close, to find comfort within ; a universe self-contained, sufficing, and withdrawn from baffling questions.

But she could not escape a sense of all the tragic bound things : The Christ bound in the churches ; suffering Humanity bound by Civilisation ; Love with eyes bound by obsolete laws and by the lusts of man, the Blind Marksman of the race.

7.

Gallup returned to England on an unpleasant evening in late October. The journey across the Channel was rough and cold ; London met him in a moist gloom. Out in the suburbs it was no more exhilarating. As he descended from the train he turned down the High Street in the opposite direction to his home, until he came to an old hostelry celebrated for its port and whisky. He stumbled upon the entrance forgetting that it was set below the level of the path, and cursed the builder and the landlord, and all subsequent owners and occupiers of the place, in language which owed its fluency to several countries.

The landlord, preparing to answer after the same manner within his limitations, recognised him, and became propitiatory. " Rum lot those old builders, sir. Nasty evenin'. Glad to see you back. The coffee-room is empty."

" Yes, and cold as a crypt ; I'll stay here."

He sat down in the private bar and called for the famed whisky, and damned himself for an unbalanced old woman who had come half across Europe because of an ambiguous letter from a girl. Of course, there were business matters which it would be well to discuss with his firm ; but that did not alter the fact that her letter had hastened his arrival.

There was a division man-high between the public and the private bar ; the occupants of the latter were free of the conversations of the former and the activity of its counter. Across that counter Gallup saw a lined and grimy face poked forward in confidence. It asked for a good bottle of port, as the missus had been confined, and had had a hard time, and couldn't get strong again. Four shillings were counted out, while Gallup watched with curiosity to see what exchange in wine the barman would offer. He bristled at the sight of a white-labelled bottle ; and going to the counter also leaned

forward, so that his face was but a little removed from the workman's.

"Take that bottle away," he said ferociously to the barman, "and give this man a bottle of 1884 black seal; and let me see it first. Take back your four shillings, man, and spend it on food. Let your wife eat with the wine; it's not the way to enjoy it, but probably it will do her more good. If you can afford to get any more at that price come here, and see the bottle tallies with the one I have ordered."

Glaring round again with renewed ferocity, so that the workman decided not to attempt any thanks, he paid for the wine, and walked out in as bad a temper as he had entered.

It was an accursed world; unfit for anyone: for the poor who were swindled; for women who were obliged to have babies; for people like himself who only craved to be let alone, and were constantly annoyed and disturbed. Swindling and babies—nice infernal things to greet one on arrival in one's country! He flung open the door of his house and Joseph hurried out.

"Good lord, sir! You didn't let us know——"

"Get me something to eat, and light fires everywhere."

He found some consolation in listening to the rushing to and fro without. A pork chop and a baked apple dumpling tasted good in front of a log fire.

"Don't call me in the morning until I ring; and tell your wife to lay her fire without disembowelling the range with some iron contrivance."

He disappeared upstairs. Joseph and his wife, thankful that the worst was over, discussed his unexpected arrival.

"It's to do with Miss Jane's engagement; that's what it is," said Mrs. Cane.

"You 'ave got a soft head. Do you think a man 'ud come from forrin parts, and cross the sea, because a young gal has got engaged. Pon' my soul, you're more soft than I thought you was."

"I don't care; I believe I'm right. Everybody has got to have a care for some human being. An' he thinks the world o' Miss Jane. And he's come over to have a look at her young man."

"'Ave it your own way! You'd better put on yer things, and go out and get some different bacon to what we've got before the shops is closed."

Mrs. Cane hurried out, posting on her way a card to Miss Jane ; who was admitted with a caution the next morning.

" Don't make a noise, Miss."

" Is he ill ? "

" No, but in an awful temper, beggin' his pardon. Joseph say it was the weather ; but 'e posted a letter for him to the landlord of The Fox ; and I've bin thinking he must have give him some bad spirits."

His niece laughed. " They wouldn't dare. Isn't he up yet ? I'll go in the garden and cut the dead flowers off."

" Does 'e know of your engagement, Miss Jane ? "

" Not exactly, Pollie."

" I wouldn't tell him this morning, Miss. There's no knowing what he'll say ; an' he might hurt your feelings."

She smiled. She felt she did not care a rap about her feelings. She was only glad to have him back. She took a pair of garden scissors and went outside.

The garden was drenched with dew and mist. It looked unreal and lifeless until it was invaded by the turbulent entrance of Gallup. He came forward aggressively, as though to storm disputed ground.

She held out both hands, and he grasped them ; looking at her with eyes crossed with small red veins, but lit with so keen a fire that Jane thrilled, and then reddened, as though she followed the thoughts which acknowledged the added tenderness of her, the maturing lines of her womanhood.

" You didn't expect me home yet ? "

" No. How jolly ! "

" I've not been jolly yet."

" Then get out your hat with the streamers and have a long day with me."

This invitation, with the sense it carried of a woman's acknowledgment of her power to please, was growth with a vengeance, he thought.

He shot out a question : " You think you're in love ? "

She offered him her hands again.

He refused. " No, no ! Let's have it out fair and square. It is no man, I lay a wager ; but some one you've fashioned yourself, out of heaven knows what chimeras ! "

" No, he was made quite a long time ago."

" Don't expect me to come to the wedding."

" But we haven't——"

"I know your mother. She won't rest until she has accomplished the end. Women look upon marriage not as an end, but the end. While the devil knows it is the beginning of—of——"

She coaxed his arm within hers. She said with extreme gentleness, "I don't think you really know, dear."

"I know that the majority of women are taught to look upon marriage as the only interesting game in life, and end in finding it a deadly slavery or deadly monotonous." He wriggled his arm free and faced her. "What's his name?"

"Ernest Trask."

"Good Lord, Jane!"

"He is not a man to be understood all at once. He is silent, and grave——"

"Perhaps you may have read that your gravest bird is an owl, your gravest animal a donkey, and your gravest man a fool."

"You are unfair."

"It is enough to make me. You—an ignorant girl—starting out to make this experiment, about which you know nothing, and with a man who will never learn anything. I met him once. Don't interrupt. You think this blind move worth while?"

"It must be."

"What do you mean by must be?"

"You—you haven't done very well without it, have you?"

"It—it?"

"Love," she breathed; forced to the speaking of the word, and vaguely aware of using foreign coinage of which perhaps neither of them knew the value.

"Love!" he fumed; and called upon heaven and hell to tell him what she meant by the term.

She recovered herself before his spleen. "Perhaps we shall understand each other better when I am middle-aged," she suggested. Then regarded him soberly, as though some fear of that middle-aged encounter fell upon her.

"Love at your age is mainly a thing of the senses," he said.

This had no meaning for her. She replied as though humouring him. "When may it be said to become a thing of the spirit?"

"We will wait for that middle-aged rencontre, Jane."

"I shall be there," she said gaily.

"You promised me, before I went abroad, not to settle anything of moment without first consulting me. But the first sin of your sex was disobedience."

"It was you who suggested that the theft of the apple was woman's undeniable claim to a quicker intelligence than man's."

"If their intelligence is quicker their wisdom is remarkably lacking."

She laughed light-heartedly; and he was impelled to provide another cold douche for her.

"We know nothing of love until we are too old to inspire it," he said; and added with acerbity, "There is more truth in that than you will care to acknowledge one day."

He had to admit, after she left him, that his hastened journey on her behalf had been in vain, so far as any warning was concerned.

He seized a pen and decided to write a letter; in which he could state more plainly things it was impossible to say.

He started with an extravagant obelus, and reminded her of its use in ancient manuscripts and old editions of classics to indicate a suspected passage or reading: "So I obelise this love tale of yours. I can't get a grip of it; and suspect you haven't a grip of it yourself. What have you in common with this man? What points of view, what interests? Marriage is invariably a rascally bargain on the part of the man; to enable him to drift into a slipshod middle-age, with his wife as housekeeper, nurse, and bearer of his children. You are attempting *prendre la lune avec les dents*." He gripped the pen harder. "You are not made for sensual respectability. You want the respect of your own mind. Neither is marriage only for the rearing and procreation of children, or one might institute a service for cattle breeding. It is one of the most blundering of men's social arrangements. What do you know of these? What does a man of no imagination suspect——"

He threw down the pen. The ink splashed over the scattered papers on the desk. He was seized with the futility of words and the memory of her face. He tore the letter up. "We shall have to wait for that middle-aged encounter," he thought grimly, and rang for soda-water.

Two hours later he made a circuitous route to his room, assaulting several doors until he discovered his own. A stone water-bottle had been placed in the bed. He swore evilly as he came in contact with it.

8.

At the same hour his niece was sitting on the edge of her bed looking alternately at the night and at a letter from her lover. The letter was simple enough; concerned with incidents bare of intrinsic interest either in their happening or recital. There were no impassioned outbursts either, making them serve as foil for a lover's hardly restrained emotions. But Jane's heart was centred on the colouring of the beginning and the end, where she stood declared as Darling; and he on the last page as Your own Ernest.

She had known no precocious intimacy of such terms, and they stared at her strange and incredible.

Outside the night breathed of simple assurances and peace, as she sat weaving her tenuous dreams; fashioned from the extraordinary perversions of her ignorance, and of the glamour gathered from romances and poets. . . . Of the miracle of parentage she was ignorant. No friendship at school had ripened into sufficient intimacy to throw any crude suggestion upon the problem; and any questions she had asked of her mother and Mrs. Cane had been met with such pained apologies for answers, that she had not been able to pursue them. Any light which might have fallen on the subject from her reading she twisted to fit her shadowy surmises.

If Truth may be imagined weeping we might expect to behold her shedding tears at the spectacle of Innocence weaving her dreams.

Her lover guessed nothing of this shining encompassment of her life. When she talked fantastically he thought her clever; when he felt perplexed he would indulge in clumsy teasing; as an ignorant parent will tease an inquiring child.

Under their mutual blindness she wove her conception of an understanding masking itself in silence, or cloaking itself under a pretence of folly. She was further confused by the ripening senses of her body, and her tragic ignorance of their meaning.

She moved along the path of her destiny a victim of the

moral perversion of the century ; with its inculcation of physical shame for the body, which in its churches was affirmed to be the temple of the living God. Thus was preserved the sensual tradition of an older civilisation which insisted on shame as one of the essential virtues of women.

9.

Sometimes Jane spent a day with her lover's mother, admiring her slow house-wifely movements ; the exact care with which meals were prepared, the anxiety that her son should enjoy them. These activities appeared as the tranquil presentment of good old-fashioned ideals ; embodying pictures of generations of mothers bending for ever over steaming pots of comfort. She saw upon them nothing but the seal of countless unselfishnesses and solitudes ; and did not inquire, at this time, whether the human digestive apparatus needed such a constant toll of service.

The standards of being were so grotesque by which she had been surrounded, and so much a matter of satisfied acceptance, that one of the tragedies of her childhood's memories was a Christmas Day, which had been filled with despair and ill-temper, because the cook had served the sirloin of beef on that day instead of the turkey. Her father's rage, her mother's dismay, the cook's tears, remained an indelible recollection.

Mrs. Trask initiated Jane into the mysteries of the unceasing rites for the feeding of the body.

To her son she said, " Jane doesn't look over strong."

" She is thin, but then she is very young."

" She seems to have a taste for cooking."

" She is very quick," he said. He felt no discomfiture in relegating her youth to a succession of days spent in dusting rooms and preparing meals. Comfort and respectability had been presented to him as the theocracy of existence, and he had accepted them as most people accept their gods.

His grandfather had been a small farmer who had risen from the labouring class through the exertions of a sound body united to industry. The courtships which had preceded the fashioning of Trask had consisted of an amused and contemptuous acceptance of a relation which was primarily the subject matter for jokes and indecencies. His mother, a handsome girl and the farmer's eldest daughter, had married

the son of a prosperous fruit-importer. They sent their son and only child to one of the most approved of public schools ; and were considering Oxford when the father died. Ernest was left with a thriving business, for the successful carrying-on of which his expensive education had provided no enlightenment. The shrewd manager did not seek to instruct him in the intricacies of importing and selling fruit ; he stayed on with the firm for five years, during which time he consolidated his reputation as a cunning man of affairs, and then left, taking a large share of the goodwill of the business with him, to start on his own account.

"Not in anyway, I assure you, sir, in opposition," he had said to Trask. "But I have a wife and family to support, and I have always worked with the idea of starting for myself."

Trask, as helpless as a man left drifting on unknown perilous waters, thanked him for his past services and wished him good luck. He engaged another manager, an honest and incompetent man—Trask was afraid of competent people, they hustled his slow apprehensions and left him flurried—and the business slowly dwindled. Seeking a reason for this he concluded that it must be due to a liberal government being in power. When a conservative government followed, and the income still dwindled, he was persuaded that trade would be slow in reviving from a period of depression. Meantime people were eating more and more fruit. It was the time when fruitarian diet was first beginning to be advertised, and fruitarian doctors and recuperative fruitarian cures were discussed. But Trask and his mother never listened to "cranks" ; and believed in no reform which was not a century old. She accepted her son's views about the dwindling business, and practised strict economy in the house. Prices of commodities became one of the few topics which they discussed with sustained interest.

10.

"Give me the green boughs of a lofty tree,
Leaf and bough, to shutter and bar
My dream of the world that ought to be
From the drifting ghosts of the things that are."
Yuan Mei.

When the engagement was six months old Mrs. Arrobus and her married daughter began to talk of the desirability of a June wedding. They did not appear to consider it a

question for either Trask or Jane to decide. They would say in Jane's hearing: "Weddings must take place in the summer when people live in small houses. . . . Things would have been so different if we had still been in the old home. . . . It is impossible to get many people into these small rooms; but if it is a fine day, with the garden——"

Jane at last interposed. "June is often wet; and I can't leave home until Ann is better trained; she couldn't manage things by herself. And June might not suit Ernest."

"My dear child, mothers count on having to be left; and Ernest is not a very young man. He told me he hoped your engagement would not be a long one." Mrs. Arrobus sat with drooped lids and mouth slightly indrawn. Jane knew she was being considered unreasonable. She went on hurriedly:

"Ernest has not suggested any particular month. I don't know enough about housekeeping. And—I don't know him well enough."

"Don't be silly, Jane," said Phyllis. "If you are engaged to him of course you know him well enough. And you know perfectly well you are a good housekeeper." She sighed, remembering her housekeeping bills. It was nearing a time when payment would become imperative, and she must somehow wheedle or importunate Charles out of a larger sum than he considered necessary. Bills were an awful nuisance, but what could one do? The tradesmen preferred to send books, after all; and how could one be at the bother of going to shops, and ordering and paying for things?

"I thought it was *my* wedding," came in a volcanic burst from Jane.

Phyllis forgot the bills, Mrs. Arrobus' look of injury deepened. Her younger daughter stood by the door, flashing, rebellious; her slight hands clutching at the sides of her dress.

"Don't be so stupid and ill-tempered," said Phyllis. "Of course it is your wedding. But you act as if there isn't going to be a wedding. Don't be so ridiculous."

The door shut behind Jane.

"I shall speak to Ernest," said Mrs. Arrobus, with determination.

"Yes, I should. She is absolutely hopeless sometimes."

The Hopeless One sat on her bed, asking herself for the

first time what marriage had to do with Love. Marriage, which they talked of as a thing of deliberation and calculation ; of expediency and weather reports ; of clothes and income ; of prying people, and laws not made in any heaven.

She was seized with overwhelming fear.

When Trask came that evening she did not run to meet him. She heard her mother talking with him.

" I must be very wicked," thought Jane. " Sometimes I almost hate her."

Downstairs Mrs. Arrobus was saying, " I have not been used to so small a house as this ; a winter wedding would be a great anxiety ; and I imagine you do not want to wait for another year ? "

She looked at Trask with dim sweetness ; the reflection, as she felt, of her own unselfishness in thus hastening her daughter's departure, when of necessity it must mean less comfort for herself in the house. On an undercurrent of thought she was deciding to afford a competent servant after Jane's marriage ; even if she had to ask James to contribute something towards the wages ; and was acknowledging a certain relief which would ensue on not being perpetually under the eyes and judgments of her younger daughter.

" If you will spare her to me I shall be glad to be married at the first opportunity," he said ; and wondered if his mother would consider the engagement too short an one.

Mrs. Arrobus gave a gentle sigh, and Trask went to look for his betrothed.

She appeared to be in a businesslike mood, and insisted that he must help her do work in the garden ; there was weeding and digging to be done ; at opposite sides where they could not talk.

Trask felt in his congenial sphere working in a garden ; there was nothing to flurry him ; such difficulties as arose he felt able to master. He called across to her several times in order to make sure whether he was about to destroy a weed or a garden plant.

She laughed lightly as she gave her decision. The healing scent of the turned earth was in her nostrils, the sprays of the larches dipped on a light air, the enveloping twilight fell with a mystic peace.

They put their tools away and rubbed the earth from their fingers.

He said, " Will you marry me in June, dear ? "

" It will be here soon."

" Are you afraid to trust yourself to me ? "

She glanced at him on a suspended breath. She did not know what it was she feared. Lights showed behind the windows of the house ; and she thought how fine it would be if one need never enter a house again. All things seemed accepted of good and of happiness in the garden. In a house of her own she would have meals in the garden every day.

Trask drew her into his arms and kissed her in his deliberate way. The darkening garden filled with the night. He held her closer.

Perhaps a near guess of unknown realities of love touched her. A tremor shook her.

" You are cold," he said ; " we must go in."

" But I am quite warm."

He hastened her indoors. His kindness was unvarying.

She finally agreed to September.

The months passed.

She would sometimes feel that she knew less of the man she was about to marry than of the good-natured, slatternly girl who she was endeavouring to teach to fill her place in the house. She confessed that it took so much time to attempt to mould this raw material to more finished accomplishment that she must leave the perplexities of a trousseau to her mother and Phyllis.

In the house a sewing-woman sat ; cutting out and measuring.

She did not fear to be left with the sewing-woman or the servant, as she feared to be left with her mother and Phyllis, whose talk, and even whose silence, suggested the imminence of some disclosure from which her consciousness shrank. Even their smiles betrayed it ; assumed some fearful jest she had no wish to share. An atmosphere of treacherous mystification, deeper than that which had beset the House of the Avenue of Roses, brooded about the days, or made itself felt as a dark sea, for which she possessed no chart, flowing irresistibly towards her, breaking upon the very edge of the mirror of her phantasies. Her mother and sister did not cease to whisper and smile ; with a kind of malicious, unconscious cruelty.

Each day the clock went its round more quickly. Wedding presents arrived, sharply valued by Phyllis.

Trask came and went imperturbable to the bustle and innuendo in the house. The weather of the late summer settled into a golden calm. September brought light mists to the rising and setting sun.

She tried to reassure herself with beauty. She said to her heart : " Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Yet she was conscious of a sense of drowning. Nevertheless she repeated the words, because " they must be true."

" We are to have a fine day, dear," Trask said to her the evening before the wedding.

She bent her face over roses he had brought. Again the fugitive hope sprang in her, the insistent expectation that he would say something, on this the evening before their marriage, before which her terrible inaccessible Soul would find light and warmth.

She lifted her eyes and searched his face in a passion of enquiry ; then fell away as though smitten by blindness. . . .

It was cruel that Uncle James should have written that he was unable to come. Her father, why had he died and left her ? " You cannot get blood out of a stone." Always the illuminating phrase of his individual failure accompanied his memory.

" You are tired," Trask said, in his toneless quiet voice ; thankful that the final last act of this upheaval of his life was about to be accomplished ; an act to his thinking inevitable, like birth and death, and permitting of no interference or interruption. He put out a large sheltering hand and drew her to him.

" Charles ordered the carriages," he said. " If he happens to come in after I go, remind him to send ours in good time."

He left after a chat with her mother.

For the last time she went upstairs to the harbourage of her small room. The moon had turned cold white in the sky.

The child within her felt the clutch of the old fear, and saw itself kneeling in the shaft of light, while God remained silent behind the Gates of Heaven.

She took the discomfited child with her into bed ; but

they did not sleep. . . . To-morrow was her wedding-day. . . . Her consciousness of the child dismayed her.

Most of us perhaps kill the Self we used to be before becoming the Self we are. . . .

Charles had said, "Weddings are affairs which must be hustled or they become boring." She acknowledged his insight into the world's estimate of its functions; she would have to reckon with the hustle. "After all, it somehow isn't my wedding," she thought fantastically. . . . Anyway, Ernest would not hustle. She tried to solace herself with the memory of his calm, unmoved face; but it hung shadowy and vague upon the curtain of the night.

What was that? She sat up in bed. Surely there were footsteps on the path beneath the window.

Ernest had returned, then. There was something they yet had to say to each other.

A light wind moved the curtains at the windows; as they fell apart, a figure moved on to the lawn. But it was not Trask's. She slipped out of bed and stood by the window. The figure disturbed the unearthly atmosphere of the garden with a jolly sense of familiarity. It was of ample girth, throwing, with the aid of a remarkable nose, an hilarious shadow upon the grass; upon its head was a hat with streamers. She pushed the window farther open, and a voice reached her in a harsh whisper.

"You didn't mistake me for a burglar, Sancta Simplicitas? I wore this hat as identification. Couldn't get here earlier—What? No—you had better not come down. . . . All right. But don't wake Susan."

The dew was thick, but she glided, unseeing, over wet grass and dripping branches, and flung herself upon him. He could but hold and kiss her.

"Why didn't you let me know? Why did you say you wouldn't come?"

"I hate these affairs—you know. And—what can I do now I'm here? I can't help you." He drew out a handkerchief ominously.

The crooked smile lightened her face. "You must not blow your nose! It is as devastating as the drum in the Overture to *Rienzi*. It would shake all these Cots down. And it will not blow me out of the way, as you seem to imagine."

"When is this infernal business to-morrow?"

"Like Joseph, you don't know the meaning of infernal. The—it is at twelve."

"Good Lord!"

"What's the matter with the time?"

"Don't ask me to come to the church. No, Jane, positively I won't. . . . You're well? I suppose I must believe you. You must not stay here longer in this heavy dew. Run in; and rub your feet before you get into bed."

11.

Perhaps she slept for a few hours, but she heard the challenge the first bird made to the dawn; and caught the rustle of the unsunned wind, as though spirits fled before the light. A great glory came with the sun: of gold and blue, and flooding warmth and movement. She rose to meet it, putting behind her the fears, and the child, and the ignorances which weighed upon her; and taking her faith with both hands and setting it between her and the looks, and the hustle, and the exigencies of the day. If the future appeared like the falling of a great sea—Many waters cannot quench Love——

She slipped down the stairs into the breakfast-room.

Her mother was there, pretty and soft-looking; she kissed Jane with tenderness.

"Perhaps I haven't always understood," thought Jane; and returned her kiss with a flood of devotion.

Susan accepted it with pleased recognition. She loved ceremonies, and was pleased to feel herself the sweetly resigned widow-mother, with the weight of her own loss heroically smothered on behalf of the bride.

She played the part pleasingly throughout the day.

As for the bride—She held by her faith; refusing to let the floods drown it. And floods swept her. Whispering crowds in a church; incomprehensible words of a marriage service; conflicting smiles and tears in the vestry; the laughter of Charles and Phyllis bent on "making it go"; the crowded small rooms; the silent bridegroom; the aggressive, ill-at-ease figure of Gallup.

"I can't stand any more," he said, drawing her aside

"And remember, child——" He slipped something into her hand.

But what she had to remember he did not say. He left her abruptly ; standing there with a bank-note for a hundred pounds which she forgot to look at.

His farewell to the bridegroom was as obscure. "Take care of her. You don't know—understand——"

"I——"

But Gallup was gone.

He went with a sense of savage impotency ; which he would not allow as a recognition of the fact that perhaps for all of us there is the Only Way in life ; but for most it is a way we either miss or deem impossible.

He saw fit to deliver a lecture to Joseph and his wife after dinner, dealing with the theory of natural selection, and the results of its repudiation by civilisation.

It left Mrs. Cane, as she told her husband, not knowing whether she was on her head or her heels.

"Wotever has made 'im like this on Miss Jane's wedding day? And her looked such a picture, too. You'd 'ave thought he could have left thinkin' about his books behind for this one day. Wotever 'ave they got to do with marryin'?"

Joseph shook his head in a manner to suggest that natural selection was a topic not likely to be understood of women, but about which he, as a man, harboured profound thoughts.

"Do you think he'd had too much champagne?"

"He's got more sense wen 'e's drunk, take my word for it, than most have got wen they're sober. . . ."

In the library Gallup was writing out a cheque to some society for which his sister had recently expressed strong disapprobation. It had something to do with marriage reform ; he could not be bothered to read the pamphlets. With a hope that the reform might eventually include the abolition of all barbarous rites, he filled in a generous sum, and attempted to regard it as a revenge for the provocations of the day. . . .

A train, rushing through the twilight counties of England, carried the bride and bridegroom to a town set among hills.

A heavy rain-shower fell as the train left London ; but as it stopped at the town of the hills an unclouded evening hung out its first far stars.

PART IV
MARRIAGE

"To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
The High Soul climbs the High Way
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between on the misty flats
The rest drift to and fro."

1.

UP among the hills of the town the sheep moved in the dawn, cropping the wind-sweet grasses. Clean and gracious was the stillness, and all the life that moved in it. When the sheep lifted their heads perhaps they saw that presently smoke rose up from many chimneys. The town had a large population, besides the visitors who came to it all the year round. They mostly came to gain health, about which they were much in the dark. The smoke arose in the cooking of foods for breakfasts, which they ate fastidiously and with small enjoyment. Afterwards they would go out and shop, and walk up and down in uncomfortable clothes, and talk of themselves, and toss about names and reputations. Discontent and sickness strove with wealth and confusion.

Like the confusion of an ant-heap, and less to be understood, was the confusion of the town at the feet of its watching hills.

In the large window of a room which stood above a sunk road, and behind which a beacon rose steeply, Ernest Trask stood. Breakfast was set on a table. Mr. Dowkins, sometime butler, now landlord, moved about with the stealthy step and under-glance characteristic of animals of prey. Like these he was endowed with resourcefulness; which quality had enabled him to prey to such advantage on the quarry which civilization had delivered into his hands that, at the end of fifteen years, he had resigned—with a comfortable bank balance—his position as butler to an alcoholic Major of the Guards, in order to marry the woman of his choice, and to adopt a livelihood less consciously predatory. He had achieved his harvest by suppressing the natural geniality of his nature to a show of bland impassivity, under whose impressive indifference tips became swollen even in the very passage from their owners' pockets to his.

He was exercising passivity now; but his own marriage having been successful, he shared some of his wife's curiosity in the newly-wedded. And she would ask him questions when he returned to the kitchen; there was no doubt of that.

He shuffled the silver on the table, and the bridegroom turned from his absorbed contemplation of the scene without the window, and ordered that things should be kept hot until he rang the bell.

Dowkins put sympathy into his "Yes, sir." His heart was large and responded to the unending predicaments of human beings.

But, watching with his wife the deterioration of the bridal breakfast, he began to feel annoyed with the grave groom upstairs.

"He's young, isn't he; I only got a glimpse of him last evening?" Mrs. Dowkins asked.

"'E's young right enough; though not such a chicken as her. Perhaps he's one of them very goody sort." He passed a heavy arm round his wife's waist, and gave her an emphatic kiss.

"I wish you'd learn to be sensible when I'm busy," she protested; her eyes on the plates and dishes of the stove.

"Blimey, if you're going to make me believe that!" said her husband, dropping into a cockney emphasis which engaged his wife's attention, as a thing of a long-ago past only evoked by special feeling. "If you think you like 'em sensible, go and have a look at the bridegroom. *Sensible!*" His thwarted sentiments developed scorn as he spoke.

"Perhaps he's the steady sort."

"Steady perhaps he is; but wot has he got to do with steadiness on his honeymoon? Standin' at the winder same as if he was thinkin' of goin' off to business. Upon my aff-davy I sometimes wonder 'ow wummen stand some men! Tamed into respectable rabbits some of 'em are before they marry; and have lost all taste for courtin'. And some never had feelings; which may be him hasn't upstairs. Yet some of us hit on a bit of luck, same as I did, which is more than most of us deserve."

Mrs. Dowkins was so shocked at this display of humility by her husband that she replied with an unsparing exposure of women; to which he listened with becoming gravity.

"I don't want to make a remark borderin' on indelicacy——" he began, when the ringing of a bell sent them both to the consideration of dishes and plates.

Meanwhile the bridegroom had continued to stare at the shifting mists upon the hills, in a mental obscurity far more

deeply overclouded. He was a simple man, and he expected simple situations, and had never suspected that marriage might present a difficult one : it had appeared to him as the most safeguarded of all compacts. His mother's counsels upon marriage had not included the contingency which now confronted him.

His mind spun round and round upon itself in a dilemma beyond its reach. He had no quality for the emergency which might triumphantly surmount it. He felt baffled, and aggrieved, and sorry. The simple girl he had come away with yesterday had become a stranger, to whom he knew of no means of advance. In attempting to account for such a predicament he had no power to conjecture the selective quality of an imagination which, seeking to draw only the beautiful to itself, had turned away from such communications of realities as had offered themselves to her ignorance. He asked himself over and over again, " Were most girls so ignorant ? "

Footsteps without roused the practical thought in him that anyway their holiday must not be spoilt. On their return perhaps her mother——

Her entrance was calm, he saw on a side-glance, and drew hope from it that a spoilt holiday was, at least, an unnecessary foreboding. He refrained from kissing her. Instead he repeated words which he had already spoken : " You need not fear, Jane. I won't ask any more from you than you have given me while we have been engaged. Not until you choose otherwise."

Jane, in a stillness born out of the very depths of blind and groping apprehensions, with stunned thoughts and bitterly resentful feelings against the whole world as she had dreamed she knew it, took her seat at the table. A newly-armed pride assisted her to reply lightly to Mr. Dowkins' good-morning, as he bore in a loaded tray. She endeavoured to keep him in the room by throwing out hurried questions about the surrounding country. She dreaded speech with Ernest ; it had become a thing not to be used ; a thing painful and cruel beyond bearing.

As though to challenge her sense of an eclipse of light overwhelming to the verge of extinction, the sun shone every day from a high and splendid sky. If blindness encompassed human lives light streamed from the heavens to the earth.

There were hours when the youth in her triumphed, and was made glad by the beauty of the country ; the long gold twilights, the unbroken serenity of the hills.

Trask studied guide books with conscientious thoroughness, and booked seats in daily conveyances for " places of interest." The conveyances drew up outside Mr. Dowkins' house, and Trask would go out carrying rugs and papers. She would join him, hurriedly and absorbed ; yet more than grateful in that he had spared her further painful speech, and for his acceptance of her as a companion for a holiday, out of which he meant to get those things pertaining to holidays : excursions, freedom to smoke all day, a comfortable blotting-out of business necessities.

The simplicity of his demands both touched and astonished her. His sense of " outings " was that of a child ; or of those immature creatures who had worked at The Cot as " generals."

Where was the Comrade ? The sharer in the problems and adventures life might offer ? The man whose name she bore was less a comrade than Uncle Jim, or even the young man John. His daily nearness made him more of a stranger, because she could no longer invest him with fictitious attributes ; and those she discovered intensified her bewilderment.

He kept his promise with a stolidity unbetrayed by urgent emotional impulse, or by the consideration of a honeymoon unconventional to a point of disbelief, being passed by one so bound by the usual acceptances of life as he. So opposed was his outlook to any sense of the dramatic, that comedy and tragedy were obscured from his sight, by his faith in a life whose opportunities were limited within the experiences of sleep, waking, and meals ; and the work which made these possible. By this same measure he had reduced his wedding largely to a matter of trains and guide-books, meals and excursions ; hardly allowing himself to contemplate the new relationship which accompanied it. He was afraid of new situations and adjustments, and waited to see what might happen as a best means of getting accustomed to them. He was not likely to have guessed that this safe procedure would ever be met by so improbable and devastating a shock.

When they had exhausted most of the excursions they explored the hills ; she carrying books and he a newspaper. As he saw her watching the stilly moving sheep, or the donkeys tethered at intervals, resting from bath-chair labours, he con-

jectured that she appeared to be getting used to him, and that things would turn out all right in the end.

Yet the fear that was in Jane's heart was no less an one than that she might not do more than get used to him.

For the affection and care he showed her she was almost painfully grateful, under a growing apprehension of the breaking of faith which the situation must appear to involve for him. But how keep faith with a vow given in ignorance?

She remembered in retrospect hours when she might have gained knowledge but had refused. And she clung to her refusals with a sense that at least they had preserved her from profaning words: that if her temple of life was dark at least it was holy.

His kindness and placidity were constant. Was it possible to make of him the lover of her dreams? How did one seek a mate? Did everybody grope in blindness? She recalled those premonitions of a secret at once fearful and mysterious which she had experienced at the Saturday tennis parties. She remembered the young man John.

Often she thought of her childhood; as a disconnected thing from which she was irretrievably cut off. There were many verses and hymns about happy childhood, as though happiness were only possible then. Could that be true? Was the secret which she had mirrored in the mirror of youth but the turning of the sword upon a lost Eden? She refused to believe that. Some blind intuition within warned her that to lose faith here, to be indifferent in this relation, must be an affront to creation itself. . . . And she had not been happy as a child, except on rare occasions. There were hours with Anthony—was it possible he, too, had lost his way?

Above her spread a sky of great free spaces; the hills and the life on them were saturated in simple happiness and content.

She looked upon Trask. He had reached the third page of the morning paper. One column was given up to the yearly meeting of a successful insurance company. He had no interest in the company; but he read the whole of the report. His face was already lined with the perplexities and preoccupations of a mind unable to detach itself from the anxieties of the hour: he always approached things anxiously, providing against numberless small evils which never befel.

A sense of profound impotence took her. He seemed

beyond the reach of help ; at least such help as love might bring. Her thoughts touched bitterness : " He wants a kind housekeeper. No more."

She said to him : " You must go back better for your holiday ; we are spending a lot of money."

" Never mind, we shall only have one honeymoon," he said ; with a kind of blundering humour.

The words she did not speak were, " If this is our only honeymoon then we have lost the chance of one." And she remembered Gallup's warning about " labels." Trask evidently accepted labels for the things they represented ; without questionings and therefore without regret. What were they both going to do ? . . . With themselves ; with each other ; with life ? Linnets and yellow-hammers sang and flitted about the bushes of the hills. The satisfaction of the earth and all that moved on it seemed boundless.

She leaned to Trask and kissed him above the eyes ; as one kisses a child for whom one cannot find words, because it is outside any kindred consciousness.

He smiled at her sleepily. The lethargic mould of his temperament was such that had he been told he must pass the rest of his life with Jane outside the nearer relationship that their marriage pre-supposed, he would have accepted the situation as he had accepted other exigencies of his life, as a thing ordained and without the scope of his interference. Would have lived, too, with little sense of rebellion ; he had never rebelled against what appeared to him the inevitable. Yet he was young and healthy enough, apart from his profound impassivity, to wish more earnestly than he had ever wished for anything, that Jane would in time get used enough to him to become his wife in reality.

She, beset by fears, revelations and doubts, attempted to put aside the whole problem under the practical necessity of taking advantage of their holiday. She clung to the practical as a means of action, even while she wondered how she could return to the home awaiting her, and her mother's and sister's looks, unless she came to some decision—she did not know what—brought up against the silent insensibility of his face.

Occasionally she would rap out nonsensical speech, in an attempt to ruffle his impassivity ; to find if there were any deeps to stir : " You'll never reach the Judgment Day,

Ernest, if you take so long to manipulate a tie ; there won't be anything to judge."

Conscious of cruelty in the words when spoken she awaited a protest from him.

He smiled his slow smile ; pleased to find her what he termed frivolous. He regarded it as another proof of the "getting used to him" process. And there were hours when the getting-used-to reached a nearer fulfilment than he guessed, under her fear of having wronged him, though unconsciously, and her scarcely quenched hope that he yet might prove to be the Comrade and the Lover.

The time wore on to an evening late in the month when they sat in a cottage at tea in a paradise of a small valley, made musical by a running brook. Her hair had come unloosened and he got up to put in a falling pin, and instead drew out others, and loosed it about her face. "You always ought to wear it like that," he said, and looked gravely and gently into her eyes.

Her pulse quickened on a sudden wild hope. In the small room with its homely treasures things took on a simpler aspect.

"I have been thinking—" she began ; and stopped. He had turned away and was engaged in an absorbed search for his pipe among the litter of the table.

On this occasion, as on many to follow, he did not discover what Jane thought.

She gathered the pins together and put up her hair. She felt older of a sudden, as she walked with deliberate step into the growing darkness without, through which the sound of water ran.

"I must do without love," she said ; as one who looks upon a grave that holds what made life surpassingly valuable. And thought as consolation : "There will always be the darkness ; and the water flowing."

Trask was still looking for his pipe. It took time to fill and light when found. Somebody at the gate asked him the way to the next village. It was one to which they had walked, and he began an exhaustive description. He was never sufficiently engrossed in anything to resent interruption.

The stranger thanked him and said, "The girls are apparently as attractive as the country." He glanced at the lane Jane had passed down.

Trask hurried after her. The chance words had given him the outside impetus he required to set him to any definite course. They would be returning home in three days ; he would ask her to absolve him from his promise.

She had found the stream and was sitting by it. A low moon was in the sky. Jane's romanticism was persistent ; and it had been her suggestion that they should come late to the village and return by moonlight.

" Make room for me," he said.

She moved, without looking up, to where the bank offered a wider space of smoothness.

He sat by her. The silence was liquid with the bubbling and flowing of the water. He was glad of the shadows, and that she kept her direct eyes from him.

" I have kept my promise, Jane . . . We have been married nearly a month . . . I—I thought perhaps . . . Children—You love them—You know I love you." Long pauses marked his difficult speech.

What could she answer ? Had she not, but a moment before, put love out of life ? What was this thing he was urging her to ? How could he name love ? Where was love's assurance and faith ?

She was aware of him sitting in a humble silence waiting for her decision. She recalled the deep emphatic " I will " of his answer to the marriage vows. He must be thinking she had broken faith with hers. She was dismayed at the thought of wronging so simple and baffled and sightless a soul as he appeared. Yet to acquiesce, seemed in the last fastness of her heart, to suggest a surrender of some intimate Self which would go forth as a bond-slave and not as the free. Behind that going would shut down the bars of an irrevocable betrayal.

On a swift glance she saw his face lined and anxious in the dim light. Life which was so difficult a thing—how could she add to its perplexities for him ?

She reached hesitating hands towards him ; and, as he clasped them in a warm relieved grasp, she thought, " I shall never be Jane again."

Thus she became his wife,

2.

“ Out flew the web and floated wide ;
The mirror crack'd from side to side ;
‘ The curse is come upon me,’ cried
The Lady of Shalott.”

Tennyson.

Many a woman, besides the Lady of Shalott, has felt a curse upon her when she turned from her girl's dream-mirror to the actuality of a world where men ride careless to and fro. The weaving of the age was pre-eminently with the stir and whirl of the body's existence : its rushing transition from place to place, its housing and feeding palaces. Its very reforms and charities were hustled and advertised, with no inclination for a further reach than the necessity of the hour.

Miles of newspapers ! Miles of advertisements ! Floods of talk ! Gargantuan meals ! Women leaving their hearths to shriek for their rights. No heed paid to anything but shrieks. Everything belonging to a Shock Age. Shock travelling ; shock art ; shock religion—except in the churches where it slept. And the human mechanism ravelled and exhausted. No place in such a world for the youth which dreams dreams, and the age which sees visions.

Jane Trask painfully began to realise this ; began to listen to the noise and friction of the actual shabby records of life, to which she had hitherto refused a hearing as belying a Paradise so nearly discernible.

As, when in childhood, the people in the house had first emerged from out the chattering chaos which had been her first impression of them, so now they emerged, stark and chilly, from out the glamour with which she had invested them.

At the end of a long day spent in listening to innumerable injunctions about food, cleaning, and management of servants, from her husband's mother, she observed with acidity to her brother-in-law, that old Mrs. Trask possessed the cold grey eyes of uninterrupted respectability.

“ My sister-in-law is growing up,” Needham thought, amused ; and said aloud, “ Old Ernest will carry on the tradition all right.”

Jane cast an apprehensive glance at him ; constantly

engaged as she was in an effort to hide any unusual circumstance of marriage from those who knew her. Deeper, she strove to justify her choice, to deny the certainty of an irrevocable mistake. She made haste now to justify to Needham her husband's temperament. If he was grave at least he was not pompous. At the stripping process, upon which her mind was reluctantly engaged, she was constantly confronted by beings, both men and women, of preposterous pomposity. Ernest was never pompous, thank heaven!

She said to Charles: "Wasn't it a witty Frenchwoman who said that every Englishman is an island?" The simile soothed her; with her husband as an undiscovered island and his persistent silence as the unknowable sea around.

She hurried home to be there when he returned from town. It was six months since their marriage, and he had not yet failed to catch the same evening train. Before marriage it had been his custom to decide on no particular train. His mother had explained to Jane how various dishes might be kept hot without spoiling. She heard of his punctuality with resignation and a surmise that it wouldn't last.

At the turning of the key in the lock Jane ran forth. Ernest removed his coat and hat and hung them up; told her the wind had been very blustering in town, and then kissed her. He went upstairs to wash and to change into an old coat.

She waited for him in the little dining-room, where she had arranged spring flowers in a bowl. Sometimes she thought of his kindness, and his thoughtfulness in being so punctual. To-night the March wind stirred her blood insurgently. His slow step up the stairs fidgeted her; she felt flung up against some immovable barrier at which she was forever knocking, and wherein was set no door of entrance. The walls of the room were near and enclosing. She found herself thinking: "Something must happen one day."

They sat down to the table. She possessed the homing instincts, which recognised that men returning from the press and strain of business should be met by cheery appetising meals: points of light gleamed from the new linen and silver. The room was at the back of the house where a field stretched beyond the small garden. Three cows fed here, moving slowly in the fresh spring grass. The world outside the window was very good.

She glanced at her husband, eating deliberately, stooping

slightly over his plate. The warm light was on his face ; but the spring day had brought to it no quickening.

"Do you ever think of two things at once?" she asked. Though the words came quickly they bore no sharpness ; because struggling with her consciousness of the mate she had somehow missed, was her pity for a being whose soul appeared so profoundly exanimate.

"Two things at once. It wouldn't be much good would it? Why?"

She stared across the table, and through the opposing wall, and saw herself seated on this same evening with the Lover of the shattered mirror : Through their hearts danced the wind of their first spring together ; lightly tossed between them was the appreciation of the simple good things on the table ; behind their eyes was the wonder of mutual love and the issues towards which it moved.

Her figure drooped at the table ; the warmth had died out of the sky, the room was getting chilly.

"Do you remember you were afraid you wouldn't be a good housekeeper?" he asked. "There was no need ; this mince is very good. Mother says that to rewarm meat is a test of good cooking." He smiled kindly.

"I'm glad you like it," she said ; and rang the bell for the pert-faced young servant, whose name was Carrie.

Carrie cleared the things away, deciding while doing so that she would manage to have a more lively home than this if she married one of the young men with whom she was philandering. The recollection of certain letters in her room upstairs brought an impudent smile to her face.

Jane Trask went out on the balcony which led from the dining-room down a flight of steep steps into the square of garden. She did not wish to speak to the pert Carrie, nor to watch her husband bring his bag into the room, and ram the tobacco into his pipe. A terror of the future was upon her, as she sought to pierce the oncoming years for that most obscured of destinies, a woman's.

Within the room Trask lit the lamp and pulled the papers out of his bag and arranged them on the table. He had already gone through them in the office, but he would do so again as a precaution against overlooking any. There were lists, and orders, and advertisements, and one or two trade papers ; also a threepenny pamphlet setting out the dangers

of socialism. He had bought this last because he had felt that there must be some more insidious cause than any he had yet conjectured for his dwindling balance-sheet. As he had often told his mother he had probably read more than most men about the proper methods of success in business. On his shelves were numerous books on the subject.

Behind him was a nest of drawers labelled as to their contents, and bearing packets within, also labelled, and tied up with string. In searching them for a particular nib he remembered that it had taken him a week of evenings before his marriage to arrange them in their present order. He spent the greater part of each day tabulating and making notes. Bemused and bewildered by the complexities of commerce he stumbled after it, entangled in its detail, unable to reach to its rewards; handicapped by honesty as well as by lack of imagination.

Presently Jane came through the open French window shutting it behind her. Her face was small and cold, the eyes very dark in it; her hands, always nervously alive, made a groping movement in front of her.

She picked up the evening paper from the table and read down a column. A little warmth crept into her face.

"Did you read the article on the pictures at the Grafton Galleries? French Independents. Could we go?" She felt impelled to stretch out to phases of life unknown to her, but which offered the sense of release from the bog of stagnation about her.

"I don't think I did. I don't suppose you would enjoy it." He looked up frowning, trying to remember something he had heard. Ah! Yes—"A man in the train said the other morning that most of this modern art is self-advertisement. It's the end of the quarter too, at the office, and there is more work to do at that time. However if you are set on going I daresay I could get off for an hour or two one afternoon. Funny, I can't find some nibs which I am certain I put in one of these drawers. You haven't had them out, have you?"

"No," she said, dropping the paper.

She did not entertain the possibility of going by herself to the Galleries, being still under the domination of the standpoint of The Cot, where she had not been supposed to require any interest without the home. There was, too, the recognition that unless they both went she perhaps ought not to spend the small sum of money involved.

It was nearly dark now behind the long windows ; a half-moon lit the rows and rows of slate roofed cottages which ran horizontally beyond the field on the other side of a railway line. As her eyes looked along them she said abruptly, " A grocer's horse ran away this morning, Carrie told me. Fortunately the children from the cottages were in school and no one was hurt."

He looked up almost with alacrity. His interest was stirred by such incidents. Any sense in him of larger issues was of that quality which moved him before the stars : he did not attempt to bridge the distance.

" Whose cart was it ? It is absurd to allow tradesmen's carts to stand about as they do ; it is a wonder there are not more accidents."

" I don't know." Her eyes still lingered on the grey slate roofs ; they appeared to stretch out, a harsh highway of life, walked by groping spirits who asked no questions because they were not interested in any replies ; and who sought no goals because they saw none beyond the boundary of their walls.

Ernest would probably not speak again until he told her it was time to think about going to bed. His silences were so far removed from thought that they possessed no necessity to embark on speech for sympathy or guidance ; his personality appeared so little distinctive that it claimed no individual view ; he had as little grasp of the qualities which dignify human life as a man may have of the ocean by letting its waters stream through his fingers.

3.

" And for all my labour of love and life
I shall be clothed and fed,
And they'll give me an orderly funeral
When I'm still enough to be dead."
Anna Wickham.

The house they lived in was one of six at the opposite end of the suburb to The Cot, situate about two miles from it. In front was a round flower bed by the flagged path to the door. Inside the rooms were small and the stairs steep. The meals had to be carried up from the basement.

Jane had given Carrie permission to go out every afternoon. "No one ought to work all day," she said to her mother, who protested against the arrangement.

"She won't think any more of you; they never do."

Jane had no answer to this; she certainly made little headway towards understanding Carrie. She had attempted to talk over with her conditions of happier relations between mistresses and servants; but Carrie had no desire to understand principles, though she was pleased if they represented, as in this instance, an hour off every afternoon, a long evening for herself once a week, and half a day's holiday on Sunday. If called upon sometimes to relinquish any one of these privileges she was disagreeable. Jane had also sought to interest her, while they made the beds together or saw to the mixing of puddings, in other diversions from those excitements in which she was engrossed. Carrie reluctantly listened, with lids covering eyes tainted with strange knowledge. Hereafter she would describe her mistress to the grocer as "Nuffink but a kid."

His answer caused her to bridle with pleasure: "Wal, nobody could ever call you that!"

"I wish she wouldn't stare like she do."

"W'y not? Does she squint?"

"Seems to have somethin' uncanny about 'er blinkers, wich takes the spirit out of yer. And to 'ear her hold on about things like marryin'! Makes yer fit to split. And she ain't got much of a bloke 'erself. No more go in 'im than a bug."

The grocer's young man here dissociated himself from any such adverse criticism by a lively encounter with Carrie.

"If you're not quiet she'll 'ear you," she gasped. "Now, git out! If she knew as much about you all as I do she'd jaw different."

He closed an eye on her waggishly and continued his round.

Carrie spent a few minutes in readjustments of appearance, and went before her mistress, carrying a tea-tray set out with exactitude, as a concession to what might be called her conscience.

Her mistress smiled, pleased with the fresh white tray-cloth and shining things of the tea service. Then her look widened to the gaze of Carrie's objection, at some inexplicable air of libertinism about the servant's full fleshy face and jaunting figure.

Sipping her tea, Jane felt the same barrier of mistrust between herself and the girl as she was becoming conscious of in the general affairs of men. A monstrous distrust between class and class, between sex and sex, between all the professions and activities of man. Everyone wore some warped aspect which falsified human relations.

She longed to go away for a few days, to be alone and get some sense of perspective. Somewhere—surely there was such a place—where one could draw a frank breath, and advance to another with friendliness. If she stayed in this villa always she would be drawn into its acceptances. There was no solitude anywhere. Always Carrie in and out about orders and cleaning: her mother and Phyllis turning up unexpectedly: going out to tea with people who wrote quite friendly invitations, and then received one into a strained intercourse. If tea was set out in a garden it was just as formal. No one was invited to help weed a border, or dig a kitchen bed; mostly there were no kitchen beds. All evidences of work were obscured. There was talk of killing time. The virtues were tabulated so that they might be exercised without stress under the generic term of Respectability. Here was no sense of any necessity to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Such words bore an air of unreality to people whose ailments were those of over feeding and over drinking.

Sometimes she worked feverishly in the house to scatter the sense of unreality around. As she looked upon the result of her work—the spotless paint, the fresh covers of things, the smell of polish—she would think: “After all I am becoming a d’oyley person.” And she would be haunted by a procession of women like herself; impotent and frustrated, thrown backwards and forwards like stones upon a shore, by a resistless current of useless activity. Down the abyss of time, upon which she had no courage to gaze, the years would drop with infinite slowness, and with the seeming fruitlessness of rain upon a window pane.

They had come to the first anniversary of their wedding-day. They dined together in a restaurant and then went on to see a play. Trask was engrossed first with the dinner and then with the play. Having determined that this was the way to celebrate the occasion, he celebrated it thus, as though it were as impersonal an event as the signing of Magna Charta or the Battle of Waterloo.

He had no urgent need in his composition for a comrade, hardly for a mate. She had tried not to realise this; had battled against such an acceptance of him, which made of her surrender not only an unnecessary but an intolerable thing.

The dinner gave him tremendous satisfaction. He lingered over the unfamiliar hors d'oeuvres, and was moved to speak with enthusiasm of the savoury sauce served with the fish.

Endeavouring to be just to him, and to share his simple exhilaration, she could not stifle the rueful thought: "After all, it is the anniversary of our wedding-day."

She recognised herself as a much older woman than the year of their marriage marked. She also recognised that the satisfaction of his meals was more to him than the satisfaction of his creative appetite had ever been. The fact struck at her with an extraordinary sense of humiliation.

She remembered the finding of the old Courts of Love, that a wife could never expect from her husband the fine consideration of a lover, because the latter receives as a favour what the husband takes as a right; therefore love was not compatible with marriage.

From a later standpoint of time she envisaged a marriage which should be compatible with love; a marriage freed from the commercialism which bought women's bodies both in and out of marriage, and bound but by its own inherent need of fidelity and restraints.

She had discovered that it was impossible to talk of these things with the women around her, though they were amazingly unreserved concerning their marital relations, and eager to circulate any story suggesting infidelity. Discussion of the principles of human love and relationships shocked them.

Only her respect for the honesty and simplicity of Trask's character, and her compassion for its extraordinary limitations, kept her from seeing herself as a woman sold into bondage. She looked back with growing anger at the price paid by youth for the smirking silences, the intolerable perversions, the mean evasions of their elders.

As they rose to leave the restaurant, Trask remembered the occasion for their coming. He lifted his glass and said solemnly, "Here's to our anniversary."

She raised her glass in response. "I will always serve

him as well as I possibly can " she determined. That seemed to include for her the whole of life ; since Love was banished to a rare and distant chance ; like the stars beyond reach, though not beyond sight.

As they went home through a chilly night of mist, her father's face importuned her with tired defiant eyes. The remembered words moved his lips : " You can't get blood out of a stone."

4.

" The indolence of company is burdensome because it is forced. That of solitude is charming because it is free and depends upon the will."—*Rousseau*.

They had become known to a different set of people from those whom she had met at her mother's and Phyllis'. The suburb was divided into antagonistic cliques ; with which lively analogies might be made with certain societies of ants in which are to be found degenerate slave-holders and social parasites dependent upon their slaves or hosts : creatures which have sacrificed independence for idleness. The women of these cliques were nearly all idle in varying degrees. They knew nothing of any science of housekeeping or motherhood. They carried on the former in a haphazard manner through servants and tradesmen, and the latter in an equally haphazard manner through nurses and mushroom schools. They conformed to the standards of wealthier people with a great amount of friction and harassing care.

Young Mrs. Trask set out to meet them with a kind of intense friendliness ; the unappeased hunger of her heart urging her to hopes of comradeship. But she encountered a people indifferent to friendship and engrossed in social distractions. Distracted to the verge of derangement were its dinners and supper parties, served by alienated servants ; its afternoon teas, and card parties, and charity mongering. The religious set was as much engaged with social distinctions ; its manners were even more paralysed, and its heart more compressed.

A modern, well-to-do suburb at the opening of the New Century was a puzzling environment for romantic souls.

It suggested no flight towards a happier civilisation to be expected with the turning of a considerable page of Time ; rather it appeared to embrace the chains welded by its immediate forerunner. With a kind of hard brightness it frowned down the consideration of ideals as windy food for sentimentalists. Its greatest concern was for interest on money ; for this it continued to sacrifice interest in life. In its homes were its approved products : the business male and the show female.

In such a place the disunion between the spiritual and the material bore the sign of an accepted indifference. In cities of evident misery and vice, the imminent cataclysm was foreshadowed, by which humanity periodically avenges the betrayal of the soul.

A few minds, alive to that foreshadowing cataclysm, and possessing no courage to face it, accepted suburbia with its roses and tea-parties, as the best offer life made them in the way of compromise. If life was unreal here it was equally unreal in politics, religion and art. Perhaps, too, seeing that the work of destruction would be in direct ratio to the magnitude of the efforts put forth by their fathers to rear a world of material splendours, they felt something of horror, almost of desecration, at the imagined ruin of such prodigious human activities.

The Trasks, being newly-married, were the object of small conspiracies and curiosities : would they drift towards the smart, the religious, or the artistic clique ? Each one offered a welcome to the newly-married, and its own peculiar warning against the others.

One day they would find themselves taking tea with a family whose head conserved the practices of a ceremonial religion ; and where young Mrs. Trask, before the scared face of the maid bearing an ornate tea-tray, was seized with an incontinent wish to ask to be allowed to have tea in the kitchen. Some of her most diverting memories were centred in such meals ; and we escape with difficulty, if at all, from first impressions.

The maid, an immature country girl, with a side glance on Mrs. Trask, who she decided had a kind face, and another on the possibility of being able to abstract a cake for her own tea—they were kept locked up by her mistress—became immersed again in her own peculiar trouble, which was a

fear of the Holy Ghost as presented for her consideration by her master and mistress.

She had just returned from her yearly week's holiday, and had whispered to her mother in farewell: "It 'as bin lovely to get away from him for a bit."

"My dear!" ejaculated the anxious woman, "you haven't got a bad young man?"

"Oh! no. I mean the 'Oly Ghost."

Every morning her master at family prayers prayed for those whose opinions differed from his. He believed them to be eternally damned.

Such complacency bore upon Jane's perceptions with the unreality of a stage character. Even the daily papers talked as though, with the end of the century, at least crude intolerances were left behind; that, with the hailing of the new era as that of the Era of the Child, a man could hardly so preposterously forget the gentle tolerances of childhood.

Words of Gallup's returned with a chilly insistence to her: "The world of people, no less than the world they inhabit, does not progress, it merely revolves."

If she would not accept the blighting conclusion, at least she could not refrain from thinking that to reach immortality must necessarily include the preservation of one's first self. The Self about which clouds of glory linger, even if not shone upon by a too conspicuous sun.

Then there were evenings ruled by that star of the artistic set, Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart; who, besides being a dilettante of many arts, presided over unnumbered drawing-room meetings met to prevent something or other. It was astonishing how many things it was desirable to prevent. No time was left for the more strenuous effort of accomplishment. This lady embarked, with conscious courage, upon social experiments, always at the middle stage between ignominious birth struggles and difficult adoptions to circumstances. Just now it was woman's suffrage, which society women had adopted as their latest foundling.

Her husband suffered her incompetences patiently; partly from a natural unselfishness of temperament, partly because other men envied him a creature so gracious of bearing, and so fulfilling the desire of the eyes. She squandered his hard-earned income incredibly. He remonstrated with her—quarterly.

"You shouldn't have married me if you wanted a business-like, masculine wife," was the invariable gist of her reply. She would suggest that perhaps he would like her to join some of the more militant of the women's movements.

"Good Lord, no!"

At this point he would kiss her. There was really nothing else to do. He forgot his own training, with its implication that to make human beings responsible you must train them to bear responsibility. He was afraid of the thought of responsible women: he was an Englishman, and preferred to suffer known ills rather than embark on social enterprises upsetting to his conservatism.

Probably he would have been counted a churl who passed judgment on a creature so amiably builded to demand protection and give no service, and to present all the promises of womanhood, while ignoring any of its obligations.

It was some time before Jane became aware that Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart's pre-eminent accomplishment was the useful art of passing life in a series of graceful evasions. She expected her friends to acknowledge the grace and miss the evasions.

At a later date she was led to discover that the Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewarts of her world presented a problem as insistent as that afforded by a less reputable class, though one unacknowledged because conventionally accepted.

Meanwhile she held out to young Mrs. Trask the promise of those interests in which life in the villa was persistently starved: music, painting, beauty.

"Of course, I studied music and drawing abroad. One learns there the value of line and colour."

"Yes?" questioned Mrs. Trask eagerly.

Her visitor, with a pretty gesture of preoccupation, pulled the folds of a scarf through meditative fingers, and appeared lost in a past whose one quest for her had been beauty.

She emerged from it to say, "Your mother is charming, and such a sensitive temperament; I saw it at a glance. What a joy to have her so near."

"Yes," assented Jane, rather blankly.

"Do bring her with you next week—Thursday. I am arranging a musical evening for a discovery of mine—a contralto, lovely voice. She must make a profession of her singing, and I want to launch her. I can promise her a crowded room for a start."

Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart's rooms were always crowded on such occasions. Her husband tried to hide himself wherever he could. He was proud of her, of course, but the necessity for these affairs was a painful one for him. He loved old clothes and quiet rooms.

He shook hands with Jane briefly, and remembered that his wife had said : " I am not sure you will like Mrs. Trask ; perhaps you will think her pretty. I believe she is the sort of woman some men like. Her husband seems a nice quiet man." Mr. Ogilvie-Stewart had never discovered that his wife always prefaced an introduction of any comely woman to him with some such remark.

" How beautiful your wife looks in that rose dress," ventured Jane.

" Yes," said he briefly, determining not to be drawn.

Mrs. Trask took a step farther into the press of the room ; she was still sensitively alive to the imagined romance of marriage, and a little afraid that she had made a mistake, being so much a stranger, in speaking of his wife's beauty to Ogilvie-Stewart.

In and out of the two thronged rooms the hostess floated in the rose dress, among women who envied her taste, and among depressed men squeezed into uncomfortable corners. The violin pieces and " the lovely contralto," seemed but a perfunctory accompaniment to the movements of the rose dress. Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart, when possessed of a new frock, always built up a suitable function for its display. Even the expensive refreshments were powerless against its supremacy.

The evening ended at eleven. " I never keep people late. Music is so absorbing," said the hostess.

She stood in the hall tired but triumphant.

Her husband shut the door thankfully on the last guest. " Do you think people really like these affairs ? " he asked.

" Everybody was delighted," said his wife, smoothing the gleaming folds of her skirt.

" Well, it's over anyway," he replied. " Do you want the furniture moved back to-night ? "

" No. Did I look nice ? "

" Very nice."

" Of course a dress like this would show off much better in larger rooms."

"It's no good thinking of larger rooms when we spend all our income now," he said wearily.

"I suppose not," she murmured; and they followed each other silently up the staircase to their bedroom.

They both found marriage disappointing; but they had been educated to so many doubtful acceptances that they had learnt not to ask disquieting questions.

5.

There were so many shabby encounters in these days that the unguarded thing which was Jane's heart was often overcome, as though it would never again beat to the promise of high hopes. The spirit which had told Anthony that the onliest way was to believe in fairies now attempted the harder problem of believing in human beings.

If she might go away—this longing grew—even if only for three days . . . But she saw herself a suspected woman if she attempted such an experiment. If her husband said he must leave home for a few days he would be seen off with admonishing care, and received back with congratulatory satisfaction. But what would his mother and the Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewarts say, if she should slip out to some unknown destination with no excuse but that she needs must be alone?

The home whose key-hole was to be the starting point of adventure, seemed but to vibrate to the turning of a prison key.

If only Gallup would return: he at least provided an avenue of temporary escape. Yet she was aware of some reluctance to meet his eyes.

"We are all in the same boat," she thought; meaning of lost romance; which perhaps helped to explain the universal distrust; since men had no belief in the sincerity of others, and no woman's heart looked out of her eyes. She recognised that man's want of faith, though more impersonal, was wider in its implications than woman's, but woman's personal suspicions were more cruel.

So dull and difficult hung the curtain of the future that she would fling herself upon the ugly little villa bringing to perfection the half-done work of Carrie. The week-ends

brought little intermission. She had thought before marriage of the gay things they would do then : the packing of picnic baskets in summer, the buying of concert tickets in winter. But Trask had been accustomed to find his satisfaction at week-ends in the leisure to get into home slippers and coat without considering a clock, and in dealing with accumulated papers. He might endeavour to snatch a hasty walk, for the sake of health, out of the hours.

She managed, once or twice, to inveigle him to some small jaunt ; but there was so much arranging and persuading, he appeared to feel so much regret for the things he must neglect—the papers, a faulty lock—that she lost heart for the enterprise.

Sometimes, as she saw her youth being consumed by the ugly little house, she would be seized with resentment against him ; until his isolation from impulses of joy struck her anger into compassion. Here was apparent a starker loneliness than she had known ; possessing no capacity for assuagement, though outside the sun moved over the earth, and at hand was Jane's heart—ready for any communion, and every adventure. At a half-turn from him in those days—He could have gained so much.

She was grateful for the incursion of a young cousin of Trask's, who came to stay with them while he entered for a preliminary examination before taking a post in an insurance office.

His name was Oliver, his age nineteen, and he appeared extraordinarily boyish to Jane. He was full of facetiousness, enthusiasms, and, for his cousin's wife, unstinted admiration and homage.

He had splendid tales concerning the prospect of prosperity in insurance offices ; superior places of high rooms and shining counters, where it is necessary to wear neat clothes and part your hair in the right way : undeniably safe and gentlemanly. That the salaries offered to beginners postponed marriage indefinitely did not trouble him ; it prolonged the opportunities for flirtations.

An overworked father and an anxious mother had emphasised the attractions of such posts ; their earnest desire was to safeguard him from any experiences outside their own.

"I say ! You have got an awfully ripping home," he said ; after going over the house with exclamatory raptures

"But I know what's the most ripping thing in it," he added ; digging his cousin in the ribs. "The wife."

"Oh, yes, rather !" murmured Ernest.

The young man turned ingenuous eyes on Jane, who smiled nervously. He felt disappointed that no glance from the two acknowledged the inevitable romance ; but decided that he would make an excuse about having work to do in his room every evening, so that he might not be an obstacle to that chance of making love to her which was the enviable lot of Trask.

Jane discovered the pretence, and hoped that he might leave with his faith in the existence of their devotion untroubled. She was relieved that Ernest kept his gloomy prognostications of the future for the times when Oliver was not there.

She went for walks with the young man and for a few excursions to London. Once they went to a music-hall.

"It will be legs and tom-foolery," she said ; the direct phrase surprising his provincial prejudice.

They were happy in the programme until a man shuffled on and began a song about Leicester Square. There was no attractive tune to the words ; the only attraction was one which reddened Oliver's face.

"You don't want to listen to this," he stammered.

They were both very ignorant. They left the place in confusion.

That evening he did not work in his room. He sat with Jane and made rambling confessions to her.

"You are married ; you will understand. I mean—You don't mind me telling you, do you ? If I had had anyone like you—to talk —It would have been different."

"I know nothing about life," she told him ; and was conscious of Oliver and of herself living from day to day, while life continually evaded them.

"Being what you are," he murmured ingenuously.

The direct eyes fell away from his, to speculate what indeed she might imagine herself to be, who was so unaccountably unlike any Jane of her prevision.

The possibility he felt when with her of an existence whose limitations were other than those of respectability set a cool dash upon the shining of that mahogany counter. Even the chance of prolonged flirtations failed to restore its lustre ; he had been led to consider the desirability of marriage.

"After all," he remarked, "it isn't much of a life, for a man to sit on a stool adding up figures for the whole of his existence."

She quailed to hear the grating of another prison-key in the oppression of human waste around; and rallied her spirits, saying to him: "In a book belonging to my uncle I read about a higher order of alchemists who attempted to evolve spiritual gold, and found three materials necessary: sulphur, representing the earthly nature of man, salt his reasoning mind, and mercury his spirit: they thought their labour would be useless without the last."

"Yes?" he queried.

She hesitated over the application which she expected he would make himself. Then, feeling herself much older, attempted one: "I was thinking men are less wise to-day. It seems as if there were only provision made for the wants of the body and the mind; but the spirit—— No one seems to have leisure, we don't ask it, to find out about the spirit. So we are very lonely."

He slipped his arm through hers with a boyish gesture. For the first time he was aware of his cousin Ernest as a slow phlegmatic man, unmoved by the sensibilities of living; whereas it was his habit to fit people's characters to make them appear satisfactory in the situations in which he found them. He recalled the fact that in every domestic difficulty throughout his life, his parents had attributed disaster to the ordination of a divine providence.

"I expect my people believe that it was ordained that I should spend my life in an insurance office," he observed.

At that she experienced one of her quick transitions of feeling: "Ordained! I wonder what they mean by that. One can imagine a creator moving through the laws of the universe, but heaven forbid that he should be domesticated enough to sit you on an office stool!"

He was startled. In his home no one spoke of God except in a "religious" manner.

His stay lengthened to a month. During the last fortnight he made no excuse to leave Trask to his enviable chance of love-making, but talked to Jane about love and pictures, music and poetry, reading and the spending of a small income. No one had listened to his opinions with such kindness before.

At the table his cousin sat apart, marking the records of

business and deducing nothing from them. So he dealt with life ; accepting the records but making no deductions.

When the month was over Jane missed the youthful step of Oliver upon the stairs, and his frank homage.

He returned home feeling very much a man ; patronising that counter which he had looked upon with deference, and a little patronising to his parents, with their patient acceptance of the dullness of life.

He gained his place in the insurance office, and indulged in several acts of woman-worship during the following years : poor experiences some of them, but leading to a faculty for discrimination. He made an honest struggle to deal honourably with his body, and to keep clear of the jesting uncleanness which his education and the acceptances of others had led him to engage in. " You don't know what boys' schools are," he wrote to Jane Trask ; and added another contribution to her growing consciousness of the sorry struggles of mankind.

6.

" Do not fear ; do not be discouraged by the tiny insolences of people. For yourself be only careful that you are true."—*Ed. Carpenter.*

The years passed. Faithfully the seasons came and went, but among men faithfulness was rare. The new century appeared as disharmonic as any which had preceded it ; in spite of brave prophecies which had hailed it as The Century of accomplished Democracy, the Century of the Child, and the Century of Woman.

For Democracy, it was a political catchword in an age when intellect, divorced from humanity, was as cruel as stupidity. Fine ladies meant by it being kind to the poor. English children still died in slums, and because of ignorance, at the rate of a hundred thousand a year ; while in a land of twenty-three thousand doctors there were no healthy people. Everyone lived in fear of death : At the end of mean living who can be ready for a great adventure ?

Women, baffled and repressed by ignoble standards of conduct, talked sourly and irresponsibly in clubs ; worked drably in monotonous homes ; or idled their lives away in a

forced virginity which filled the air with the complainings of erotic diseases, and poured money into the coffers of the sellers of drugs, recognised and quack.

Men went on making laws, thinking it better to be safe than to be blest. A creed of cowards.

The welter of distorted things surged in Jane's ears, as she struggled to make good the decreasing income, and to hide the fact from her mother and Phyllis : Phyllis with her brief eruptions on a rush of chatter and smart clothes, and her mother repining and querulous. Both suggested that it would be more lively for Ernest and Jane—Jane so inexplicably immersed in things of the house—to move into rooms, get the housework done by some one else, and enjoy life a bit.

Jane shrank from the idea as much as her husband ; who was bound to the house by that obstinate attachment which belongs to people whose habits take the place of preferences. She also feared such a move as offering the opportunity for reflection. And where might that lead ? Possibly to the conclusion that there were better things to do than to spend each day preparing meals for a man, and mending his clothes, when these things could be carried out as well by some one else not tied to them as a life-work. How irretrievably hurt Ernest's sense of habits would be by any such defection : his habits of daily life, and those habits of mind by which he regarded marriage as a thing definite and limiting ; not from any concept of love, but because of his sense of man's accepted authority over it. Her compassion to him, her sense of the rigidity of his limitations, led her to accept her bondage as an inevitable service paid by the stronger to the weaker ; a situation strengthened daily by his increasing dependence on her. If that dependence had carried with it any of the primitive freshness and exhilaration that sometimes accompany a slumbering mind and conscience she might have found some consolation in it. But he had no spontaneous emotions. Even the photos of his childhood bore the same operose, unlighted aspect.

When he wanted anything done he always grumbled about it ; it had been his mother's method.

Jane had ceased to be irritated in his lack of interest in her as an individual. He would ask incredible questions of her as of a stranger ; and had no memory of her personal likes and dislikes. He passed her the marmalade every morning at breakfast although she never took it.

When she could no longer remain in the narrow silent house, more silent for the loss of Carrie who had left to better herself, and who was replaced by a leaden-faced married woman who came in by the day, Jane sometimes made experiment of an "At Home" day, meeting the women called "old woman" and "old girl," by facetious husbands whose talk was of "ripping" or "rotten" bridge-parties and plays. Their supposition that in the Trasks' marriage the grey mare was the better horse, a contingency for pride in horses but not in humans, so they judged, fostered the suspicion that young Mrs. Trask was presumably a thinking woman. Their suburb's ideal marriage was the strong-man husband with his acquiescing, clinging mate.

If only it could have been the other way round ; if hers had been the opportunity to conduct *him* through life—a rôle he would have been thankful to accept—she might have managed to get some perspective into existence ; to have looked upon him as a supplementary not a deciding factor.

But it was not allowed. At dinner parties she left the table with other women to chatter about frocks and servants.

In the froth of talk women would insist upon her presenting her husband to them for more familiar acceptance. "Now, I'm sure, Mrs. Trask, he's a perfect dear ! Those quiet men are ; and spoils you dreadfully."

Smirking faces turned to her. The questioner was wondering whether it would be possible to console Ernest Trask, if he were in need of consolation. Perhaps he was one of those men who desired a soul-mate. The speaker felt fitted for such a task. The Silent Strong Man of her dreams ! Ah ! how she had longed to meet him.

Mrs. Trask coloured slightly under the probing eyes. Where she had hoped for friendship there was this mental leprosy of suspicion ; these mean attempted incursions into guarded reserves ; the desire, not to approach one as an individual, but to discover some fact about which might be drawn the condemnatory ejaculations of gossip.

She learnt to lie creditably. To acquiesce in the fabricated presentment of her husband as a mysterious man whose deeps were not to be lightly sounded. She had habituated herself to the invention of kind messages in his name for those recurring neighbours' troubles about which he appeared indifferent

or forgetful. She had striven, and with success, to protect the poverty of his nature from comment.

They continued to receive invitations, though it was becoming impossible to return hospitality, owing to the precarious state of Trask's business. People set against that the lavish entertainments of the Needhams, and their acceptance of Mrs. Arrobus as a dear creature ; so delicate, and so much alone with both daughters married ; and she a widow having no son.

They felt their attitude, in view of that dwindling income, to be generous to the Trasks. Neither had Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart advanced farther in her suggested intimacy with Jane ; though she protested that she always came to her when she wanted comfort ; meaning a more generous admiration of herself than others were likely to offer, or of sympathy for what she considered a lack of appreciation of her efforts to regenerate her world.

Jane made numberless attempts to get near to the Self so charmingly presented to the world by Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart. Sometimes they would appear to approach the edge of a sincerer intercourse ; but at such a moment Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart would break off with a murmured, " I simply must return to that cherub-angel at once." " The cherub-angel " was a baby-girl, which spent its life with a vinegary-looking nurse, famous for her skill in making baby garments which prohibited any natural impulses of movement. Very early the Ogilvie-Stewart baby was broken in to the tyranny of clothes.

On an afternoon during the sixth Spring since Jane's marriage—though it doesn't do to count Springs, she thought—she went through the trim suburban roads to take tea with Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart.

She had written to Gallup overnight to tell him that if he did not return soon he would have lost her altogether. " No-one can help getting older," she had added ; to assure him that she was but compassing a usual fate.

It was a day to vitalise old dreams ; as a carriage swept by she recaptured the thrill of the Cinderella story of girlhood. There was the beautiful Princess, mysteriously herself, passing up the enchanted staircase, over whose top step leaned the figure of the Eternal Lover. They clasped hands, and entered the carriage which was to bear them to the home of Inextinguishable Love.

Mrs. Trask's figure drooped on the warm asphalted path. A passing face, exanimate and leaden, had flung her too swiftly from the kingdom of romance to the cramped roadway, bordered with its be-curtained dolls' houses.

To her rescue came a steam-roller, snorting into view with "The Morning Star" written on its grimy front. Was it a name of courage or of sardonic humour? Preceding it was an immense foreman directing the work. The sweat shone like varnish on his red face; he wore buff check trousers, the checks an inch square. Large, masterful, and energetic, he and the steam-roller dominated the listless road, and made the constrained figures of passing women and tradesmen appear poor and ineffectual.

She stepped out more briskly before this wholesome challenge of noisy cheerful labour; and looked with something like envy at the humorous blackened faces guiding the ugly dominating machine.

Work—real work! If only one might find salvation from the monotonous days and the bitter nights by finding it! Work which counted: work which would bring help and security to the lives of men.

She turned in at the newly painted gate of the house, and gave a half-defiant, half-timid knock upon the highly-polished knocker of the irreproachable front door.

Mrs. Trask's glance upon a roomful of people was apt to be apprehensive; with something left in it of the fear which had been hers before the parties of little girls in the House of the Avenue of Roses. Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart rustled forward, pleased at each opportunity for displaying a new light dress with large balloon sleeves and a hampering narrow skirt. She had been extolling the decorative effect of the imported *nouveau art*: "So cheap, too; there really is no excuse for being without a beautiful home."

"My husband does nothing but play diabolò," she said; as she picturesquely regained her seat. "It requires quite a lot of skill, and keeps him amused if I happen to be late for dinner. Has Mr. Trask taken it up?"

Jane said "No," and added: "I hope the *nouveau art* craze won't penetrate to our elementary schools. If it does we shall get no more buff-check trousers like those with the steam-roller outside."

Constrained giggles ran round the room; no one had noticed

the check trousers, but they were glad that Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart's preoccupation with art had received this light jostle. They glanced a little distrustfully at Mrs. Trask ; at the half-boyish face with its frank betrayals and ardent voice.

The room was hot : the spring air through the open windows filtered unsuccessfully through rising vapours of scent, powder and tea. Conversations, emphasised and grimacing, were renewed ; and decorated cakes nibbled. The room was shadowed by the shapes of monstrous hats.

" I hear that you were seen going into the Dudley Galleries with a tall young man last week," said Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart to Mrs. Trask, in her consciously charming manner.

" Yes, my husband's cousin, he was up for the week-end," explained Jane ; who then coloured with vexation that she should have volunteered the relationship.

" Is it true Mr. Stone asked you to go to a concert with him ? I don't believe he has ever asked anyone before."

Mr. Stone was the organist of the parish church ; a man said to be devoted to money as well as to music.

" He wanted me to hear some of the new French music. It sounded like spring." Jane's voice, gaining ardency, vibrated through the lifeless atmosphere.

" Oh ! well," said a large woman, with what she felt to be impressive tolerance, " Now so many people are going to hear the suffragettes, let alone belonging to them, women are going to be more free. In *my* young days I couldn't have gone to a concert with a man to whom I wasn't related, without—er, unpleasant insinuations."

" We must always ask where it will lead to ? " asserted a bottle-nosed deaconess.

As no one seemed inclined to answer this question, Jane remarked, " To a better understanding we must hope, and therefore to less unhappiness between men and women."

" I doubt it," said the lady. " There is a lot of immorality bound up with all this socialism, and suffragism, and Sabbath breaking." She appeared to choose these particular activities for censure because the initial letter being the same, she could deliver each with a condemnatory hiss. " And why should a woman want to go out with a man if he is not a relation ? " she concluded triumphantly.

" Companionship ; if they happen to have similar interests," suggested Jane.

"It will lead to immorality," asserted the lady tartly.

Mrs. Trask's face lost its indefinably boyish aspect. She accepted the challenge against the faith which it was so much of a struggle to preserve, but which must so essentially be kept : faith in the ultimate things of love and humanity.

"Are we all potential harlots?"

She flung the question at the assembled women with the desperate boldness of sensitive natures forced into speaking truth, at whatever cost, because of the greater despair of falsity.

She was made aware of the cost on the moment. No one enquired if there was indeed truth in the fact that their standpoint towards an aspect of life, on which they prided themselves they were above suspicion, was yet wrong to the point of having forced such a question into the respectable atmosphere of the room. They expelled the questioner mentally from their society. She felt the barriers rearing upon her as she sat.

"If they will not be honest at least they shall see the question clear," she thought; and added: "Are we only what society terms moral when we are not allowed the chance to be otherwise? Then there is no value in our morality; it is a bolstered-up thing. And there is no such thing as love: for there is no truth in us."

Her voice lost its fullness upon those last words, her eyes were at the window unmoved by the discomfiting stillness round. She had been arrested by a greater discomfiture; the realisation of how little she knew of that love by which she had indicted them.

Women babbled their good-byes. The room emptied.

Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart murmured something about the heat, and flung a window wide; glancing at the woman who still sat staring through an unopened one.

What Jane was looking at through that window, with the vividness of a mind wakened to truth by a mental shock, was a Blinded Love moving calamitously along the paths of men: a betrayed god, shackled by outworn traditions, and become a byword in the mouths of fools.

"I am sorry if I have vexed you," she said. "Why can we never talk of things that matter?"

Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart fidgetted. She wanted to be courageous enough to tell Jane that she was not in the least vexed,

that Jane was right in saying what she had. But her social ascension had been marked by anxiety and expenditure ; and what would be the verdict of the other women on the matter ? Mrs. Laing had been there, wife of a Justice of the Peace ; a woman who paid wages to six servants.

"One can't talk of things among a lot of people," she murmured vaguely.

"Good-bye," said Jane.

"Good-bye. Don't bother about it ; I don't suppose it matters."

7.

Susan Arrobus opened her morning letters. A servant of mature age brought up her tray at nine, and did the work of the house with a good deal of selflessness and not many depredations. Her mistress filled up the hours with fancy work, shopping and calls. Now that Phyllis and Jane were married, the annuity of four hundred left a margin for small extravagancies, and Susan was more content than she had been at any time of her life, albeit she constantly deplored the days when she had lived at the House of the Avenue of Roses.

The autumn was chilly ; she wore a white wool breakfast jacket with wide mauve ribbons. There were ribbons on the dressing-table, and upon the wall where a muslin screen backed the washstand, on the cushions of the sofa at the end of the bed, and at the curtains by the windows.

Susan always looked at her jacket, and at her delicate hands, and at the ribbons before she started her breakfast. She opened her letters leisurely ; there would seldom be more than two or three.

This morning she forgot to finish her tea ; she turned to the electric button of the bell and kept her finger on it until the servant Emily came hurrying in.

"Yes, m'm ?" she asked aggrieved.

"Bring me some hot water at once. No, I can't finish my breakfast. I have received a very worrying letter."

Emily took away the tray and brought hot water.

An hour later Susan Arrobus left the house, her mouth set

in those resigned lines which indicated that she considered herself ill-used.

She walked the two miles to Jane's house. The leaden-faced woman opened the door.

"Is Mrs. Trask in?"

"Yes, m'm."

Mrs. Arrobus waited in the little drawing-room, and presently Jane came. Susan scarcely returned her kiss. She asked querulously: "When will it be born?"

"February, I think."

"And why this secrecy? To your own mother."

Jane took a breath; one of despair. How was it possible that her mother could be so much of a stranger to her? When had the parting begun? What had caused the estrangement? Had the soul so little command over such a bond?

Tears darkened her eyes; but she felt no impulse to fling herself upon her mother's heart. The child of the old garden of solitude and repressions had learnt too early the hard lessons of restraint.

"I could have come more often, and helped you. I expect you have been doing all sorts of foolish things. You must have more help now: Ernest must afford it."

"I am perfectly well, there is nothing to bother about," said Jane; trying to bridge, if only superficially, the sense of the gulf between them.

While she brought her mother milk and biscuits she was acutely conscious of her own babyhood: Of the terror beyond the gravel drive; of the large and fearful moon; of the haunting tale of everlastingness before which the finality of her child's mind, looking for finished things, hung impotent and wretched over the profound of eternity: rending lonelinesses and silences. And her mother a lovely unapproachable presence not to be bothered by questions.

Beneath her heart there was a brief stirring. "You shall not be lonely, my Sweet," she assured the unborn one.

She seemed to have known no children since the days of Anthony, and seized every opportunity of speaking with them; luring them to give her a greeting in the streets, asking neighbours' children to tea, she more shy than they.

Her husband was engrossed in calculations about the extra expense; making laborious lists of items and their probable

cost. His mother said : " If you find you can't manage on your income, if I came and lived with you it would help."

He said he would think it over. He did not want her to come. He had become accustomed to his new house environment, and remembered that his mother was apt to treat him like a child.

February was a cold and bitter month, with no sun and leaden skies. There was little snow, but a gusty wind blowing the dust high.

At ten on a Monday morning, after thirty hours of pain, unconsciousness and delirium, a baby boy was born. It was dead ; having been sacrificed to the mother's life. The mother was still unconscious ; they laid the baby on a bed in another room.

The father had left the house at nine. When he returned at eleven he met the doctor coming out.

" Is it all right ? " he asked.

" I was astounded to hear you had gone out," said the doctor.

" My brother-in-law gave me a cheque yesterday, which he wanted paid in to his account in good time this morning," Trask answered ; wondering if after all he ought to have remained at home.

" The child is dead ; it was inevitable," said the doctor shortly, and hurried from Trask's bewildered " Why——"

His mother was at the door. " Jane ? " he gasped, gripping her arm. For the first time the possibility of death had reached him.

" She is sleeping ; and must not be disturbed. The doctor will be back in two hours. The baby——"

He stumbled before her into the drawing-room. " I know," he said ; and saw that his mother had been crying. He did not remember having ever seen her cry.

They sat in a miserable silence. Presently a slow wrath began to take the place of Trask's fear ; it was his habit before any confusion of mind.

" You told me it would be all right. Why—why wasn't it ? "

" I haven't heard much yet. Except that it is a fine baby. It is on the bed in the back bedroom. It is like a photo of her father."

Trask felt no interest in the baby ; that Jane should be

near death meant the collapse of his world about him. He felt indignantly wrath with God. He did not word his thought ; but the consciousness that he had been a " good " husband, and did not deserve such a blow, made his mood one of sullen despair rather than of grief.

" It's a healthy thing for young women to bear children," he heard his mother say.

When the doctor returned he followed him upstairs, and went into the bedroom where Jane lay, with dark hair brushed back from a blotched and distorted face.

" How long will she look like that ? " he asked.

" It will pass off gradually," answered the nurse ; and he went with her into the room where the baby was. It looked profoundly at peace, in spite of a congested appearance round the closed eyes. Its hair was dark. He did not feel like its father ; he seemed to have no sense of nearness to it. He did not even enquire if it were a boy or a girl. " Will my wife soon be better ? " he asked the nurse.

" Oh ! we hope so," she said. " With care—oh, yes."

" She must have everything she wants," he said in a blind misery.

" Of course we shall do all we can for her," said the nurse.

He went down again to his mother. " She is still unconscious," he said.

" Exhaustion," she murmured.

The slow day dragged on. He was glad when his mother left. Slow weeks followed. For days the young mother's brain had not recovered entire consciousness ; then her digestion, which had suffered such ill-directed exploits in youth, broke down under the present strain ; and further exploits on the part of the nurse, confused by diet-charts of conflicting opinions, wrought more mischief.

The doctor first spoke of the baby to Jane. " Do you remember anything about it ? " he asked kindly.

" I know," she said.

" Better luck next time," he went on genially. " The maternal novitiate, you know. It was a fine boy. And now you must get well."

" I am sorry you did not see it," said the nurse.

Jane made an acquiescent movement. In the exhausted negation of being to which she had come, the death of her baby seemed inextricably one with some betrayal of life to

which inexorable circumstance had driven her. She kept thinking, "All is ended. There is nothing more to be done or said."

Though progression was scarcely noticeable day by day, her body got slowly a little stronger. She came downstairs in April. The small leaves and the birds were a wonder to look at: they moved impetuously, they were drenched in dancing light. The light was cruel in its intensity, it hurt her eyes. She suffered from persistent neuralgia.

Trask could not understand her shrinking from light or sharp noise. He always made noises in dressing and moving about, constantly misjudging distances if in a hurry, or knocking into things absent-mindedly.

If she asked him to pull a blind while he was dressing he would finish the slow processes of his getting up first; until his unconscious cruelty made her reluctant pulse beat still more chilly. He never hastened to do a service.

"Will this go on until the end?" she thought. Her mind found no strength to rise above the numbness which was upon her body, and her soul, and her thinking.

8.

"The experience of retired men is positive,—that we lose our days and are barren of thought for want of some person to talk with. The understanding can no more empty itself by its own action than can a deal box."—*Emerson*.

She appeared to become more absorbed than ever in the routine of the house. She worked more slowly than heretofore; and did not go out often, there were so many children about.

Trask spent the week-ends gardening when he was not making notes. He had talked with his mother about looking for a situation before he should become faced with a bankrupt business. The prospect left him more silent than ever.

Another spring came.

On an afternoon of a high blue sky and a veering wind, a cab drove up to the villa, and the knocker being used with violence Jane hurried to open it.

"Sancta Simplicitas—Good Lord! You told me you

were all right. Get your hat on and come back with me. I've got some port wine. Nonsense, of course you'll come! Thunder! I let that cab go. Where's your hat; can I get it?"

Jane smiled; something of the exhilaration of the world without touched her with a kind of surprise.

"Where—how did you come? You've been coming for so long, and never a fixed date."

"What have you been doing?" he asked harshly; because of her voice, and some look within the eyes which were still so much the same eyes which he had first seen at his brother-in-law's funeral.

"I have been doing nothing—I haven't even bought a spring hat. But if you had let me know you were coming——"

"Don't talk," he said. "Don't talk. Get ready and come."

She went upstairs and put on a lighter dress. "He will find how much older I am," she reflected, "all the same."

Downstairs Gallup stalked up and down anathematising the room, and the place, and the country, and marriage.

"Imagine keeping a woman for six years in a damned cage like this! Some of 'em may stand it——" His sense of his niece as a woman of mind, and a woman singularly fashioned to withstand the contagions of life, left him struggling with his anger and with a reborn flood of affection. Her image had become obscured as the years had passed, and he had not sought to revive it, deeming her marriage an effectual barrier between them. But at sight of her—and what the devil was the trouble? he experienced an extraordinary accession of affection and apprehension; also the misgiving, which had assailed him in the old days, that somehow he was implicated in whatever of disaster had overtaken her. It being at variance with his temper to allow himself as in any way responsible for anyone's predicaments, save his own, he switched his thoughts on to the efficacy of old port and best English beef as sure means of rehabilitating a discomfited body.

Outside she took his arm; the wind was boisterous.

"You must buy clothes," he blustered. "Go to the theatre, get a new hat. You used to be interested in mine."

"The streamers——" she murmured; and marvelled that

she was still the same Jane who had known how to laugh to the exclusion of any other sense.

Joseph and Pollie were standing at the open door to the house of the cul-de-sac. It had been let furnished for most of the time of Gallup's absence, and Jane had seen little of them. The smell of furniture polish reached beyond the door. Gallup's nose twitched. "I can't cure them of it," he said. "We are all intemperate in something."

Pollie kissed Jane impulsively, apologising.

"We're all older," Jane thought.

There was a crackling wood fire in the library; savoury smells were in the air. Gallup was handling a bottle with reverence. "Wine of Lethe," he said. "You see if I'm not right."

"It is nice to be so very comfortable," thought she, in despite of herself. For the first time she became appreciative of the causes which lead men to build palaces of luxury to eat and to be amused in. "But if they were not baulked of things that matter more they wouldn't want them," she made the reservation; fearing a descension to some plane where one might forget one had a spirit, and might accept the animal's desire for food and warmth.

After dinner another bottle was brought out; although her participation in the other had been small.

"Only managed to get three," explained Gallup. "Got 'em from the Old Cock Tavern when they moved. See that? Bee's wing. Delicate as new-milk; wouldn't hurt a babe."

"Don't waste it on me."

He looked at her as a doctor may look at an interesting case. She appeared to him still vital and individual under the physical languor; once or twice he caught the old gaze of absorbed intensity, though it quickly fell away; perhaps because she was hoping to protect herself by this same languor from the danger of any renewed deep interest in life.

He judged that the loss of her child alone would not have driven her to the resignation of existence which was upon her . . . She had probably shared Shelley's hope to live as though love and life were one. These impossible idealists bring a deal of suffering upon themselves . . . Yet he admitted that she might have preserved her illusions given a mate of exceptional understanding and manhood. There was no doubt she possessed a genius for generous intimacies—

a rare thing in woman—and of which her life was persistently stripped.

He decided to attempt to thrash the situation out with her ; learn just where she stood. If Trask could be persuaded to let her come abroad with him for a year—but that was a foredoomed hope—Trask was preeminently a man of custom, and doubtless of rigid convictions upon the inexorable rights of husbands.

Like most men Gallup hated explanations, and made several abortive efforts at a start. At last : “ Of course, Jane, children are not the whole of life : you recognise that. Neither is love. I’ve managed to keep a certain amount of interest in living without either.” He was not certain whether she murmured poor dear. “ You take my mother, for instance : she had two children, your mother and me—Susan never got on well with her. I, as a boy, treated her with a good deal of patronising indifference ; we learn that in public schools for mothers and sisters. She died before I realised that I had been something of a contemptible ass. As for marriage—it’s an economical speculation.” He blew his nose on a defiant note.

She said gently, happy to listen to him. “ You were born a sentimentalist, really, only the nineteenth century has tried to twist you into a cynic.”

“ Ah ! You hope to make me angry by that ! Good ! I daresay I am tainted with sentimentalism ; it was the curse of the last century ; which provided more paths to hell than any other.”

“ Cynicism won’t land you into heaven, anyway.”

“ I’ll relinquish hell if you’ll relinquish heaven.”

She found no answer ; but at the idea of such a sweeping renunciation she felt her last hold on life shaken by a blast cold beyond enduring.

“ There are early sacred plays where you will find a chorus sung by God and Satan together. Perhaps that represents the compromise furnished by our world ; which is quite a bearable place after all, Jane. Have another glass of wine ? Haven’t you made any friends ? ”

“ Have you ? ” she asked. “ You see in your ‘ bearable ’ world they are all so bent on going one better than the other.”

“ You must go and live with savage races if you want community of spirit ! We’ve got to make the best of the age

we live in. It happens to be a barbarous age ; so we have to content ourselves with an impersonal view of happiness. Apart from the relation of the sexes, which I grant you is intolerable, the world is becoming gayer. We have exposed the Pharisee, and are something less concerned with conventional morals ; which leaves youth freer to concern itself with the morality of happiness."

No-one had talked with her it seemed for an eternity. Her brain began to be moved by counter apprehensions ; and to such length that he received the summing-up of the situation more exactly than he could have anticipated.

She appeared to make a sudden rally of her forces, sitting up tense and straight before him.

"Have you ever lived with a fool, James ?" she asked.

He noted the dropping of the term uncle, as her own realisation, as well as his, that she was speaking to him for the first time as a dispassionate woman, looking on at herself, and facing a shattering truth. She went on :

"Have you known what it is to be slowly frozen mind and body ? It isn't only the personal standpoint. If only he could understand, show any live sympathy with anything. No—don't speak ! I remember what you said to me once about tragedy and the fool. I have never unmasked myself before. I appreciate what you said, that such sights are only for the gods ; they see truth near enough not to laugh."

He tried not to show stupefaction before the naked statement presented. He said :

"When we reach a point where we dare only show ourselves to the gods, we've got also to reach some standpoint towards our fellows—that's certain."

"He didn't even care—with any reality—about having a child——"

"The age," he murmured. "Enforced virginity on one side, and prostitution and no escape but a death sentence in marriage on the other . . . Not that Trask objects to a death sentence ; but—The standpoint infects us all. Well ! There ; stay with me a week, and we'll resume talk of ourselves and the universe. I'll drop a line to Trask. He'll agree. You must have a change."

"Ah ! yes," she said, hurriedly. "He always means to be kind."

The inkpot proved to be empty. There was an assault

on the bell. Upon the door opening the inkpot hurtled through the air.

Joseph was a countryman, he fielded it with promptitude. Jane laughed.

Gallup said: "You haven't forgotten how to laugh."

Whereat she flung at him: "The truth is I don't think I've had enough illicit kisses."

Upon that he executed a dance before her. "Play up, Jane," he said. "Play up! You've hit the mark. You shouldn't have expected a big experience before dipping into some little ones?"

"I did expect," she murmured.

He glanced at her with disquietude. He had decided that love was a negligible element in life; a sudden fury; a passing disease: but Jane——

"There would be the deuce to pay," he concluded.

9.

"I have the feelings of a woman, but I have only the language of men."

Bathsheba: Thomas Hardy.

She awoke next morning with a confused sense of being in another world. A motherly hand was stroking the hair back from her eyes; bridging the years to the days of the Dream-mother. In some air beyond sight, birds sang deliriously.

Her brain stirred to further waking. Above her was Pollie's homely face, with comfortable creases and mottled colour.

"Miss Jane—begging your pardon, m'm; do you fancy this hot rum and milk? Nothing like it for pulling the strength up. Do you hear the thrushes? They sing here like in the garden of the old house; and your pore dear father; pore dear gentleman."

She sat up and drank the warm concoction; and wondered if Joseph and Pollie missed her father more than anyone else did; a sorry thought, when his life had been spent to satisfy her mother.

Mrs. Cane babbled on: "I sometimes wish we kep' chickens here; but I don't think Mr. Gallup would fancy them.

They're home-like birds. I remember the day you was born a funny thing happened. The black hen—that is the prize one—killed one of her chicks. A light one had got in by mistake with the setten', and she didn't like it because it was different from the rest. Joseph thought that must ha' been the reason. . . . I'll have to go, or breakfast will be late."

Again Jane was alone. Outside the thrushes still sang exultingly. She drifted back along their music to the summers of the garden where the roses had stood along the drive. Trix used to come and wake her sometimes in the morning. She would say, "Now, get out of that, you boney-nosed rabbit!" Words which had power to make her shiver, and hold her nose to be sure of its softness. . . . Again she saw herself counting the trees in the triangular wood; and was that Anthony passing through them calling on her? Or was it his spirit which always evaded her in those flash-like movements and murmurs which never ceased among the shadows?

She started at a voice beneath the window:

"Sancta Simplicitas, are you coming down, or shall I bring things up to you?"

She slipped out of bed. "I am coming down, of course. Wait for me, there's a dear."

She caught something about "a wheedling puss"; and felt so far removed from anything so manageable that a moisture upon her eyes quickened and flowed down her cheeks. At that she made great work with cold water; and went down with something of the bleakness upon her that the thought of a boney-nosed rabbit used to induce.

"Come along, my variable Iris," began Gallup, heaping bacon and tomatoes on to a plate.

"Don't expect to find me variable," she said; accepting the helping without a protest. "I have felt sometimes as though everyone were dead."

"Egoism, Jane! They're still at their old games."

He waved a coffee cup towards the open window from which could be seen, from both sides of the street, gates opening to let men out to their various occupations: black-coated, top-hatted—the houses were highly rented—complacent, drinkers of whisky and eaters of much meat.

"They afford proof of the fact that man isn't a legal

animal save by degeneracy" said he; determined to talk, and bolting huge mouthfuls which punctuated his speech erratically. "Middle-class morality! What a preposterous nation we are. Worse in Germany, as a matter of fact. They give the police there the right to defend conventional religion and customs against attack; and even the tastes of the people. Imagine a policeman pulling you up and telling you, you were making in the wrong direction for heaven! Better a priest, so long as people insist on material heavens."

He had fixed her attention, though she played with her food as one dissociated from simple instincts.

Probably to divert him from her unfinished breakfast, she said: "Go on gassing, there's a dear! I haven't listened to anyone talking for seven years. I've often felt like a squabby barn-door fowl just running round clucking."

"Well! we'll consider some of the astounding adventures of humanity this week."

She smiled blankly, she had lost the sense of adventure.

He saw the look and gulped down coffee while he thought, "Rotten society, where we rear up ignorant romantic women and then expect them to pay the price for catastrophes like this."

He was moved to intense annoyance with those short-sighted writers and reviewers who, having read or witnessed the performance of "A Gauntlet" and of "A Doll's House," had henceforth concluded that the acting of these in English play-houses was tantamount to the loosing of the bondages they impugned. Whereas, all over the country, despite many brave throwing down of gauntlets, dolls' houses were still in the majority, and men evinced no active dissatisfaction with them. In a hundred years perhaps, unless some cataclysm—

"I've ordered a carriage to be here at eleven," he said. "We'll go over to the gardens at Leathorpe."

"I'm not really an invalid," she remonstrated, as they passed along the glancing light and shade of the spring ways.

Beside him she looked extraordinarily fragile; her thin skin showing every accession of colour, and a blue vein on the temples. He was reddened by the heat of a sunnier climate, and the excesses and choler of his maturity.

"Perhaps if you had another child?" he blurted out.

She shrank beside him, and murmured, "I cannot do that."

"Then what——" he began; and broke off to end testily: "You seem to have made a nice hash of it, Jane."

He felt he was being drawn in with her to tiresome and conflicting issues; when he had determined to pass his remaining years in those amiable pleasures which are dissociated from contention.

In the gardens, gorgeous with sunlight and flowering bulbs—they had been the pleasure grounds of a noble house once—her meekness of acquiescence and the manner of her, showed him she accepted his statement as to the hash she had made of things. After all, she had sufficiently realised that before his coming, as he perceived; but his annoyance with a situation he felt so powerless to relieve had driven him to the words.

A peacock spread a burnished tail before an inconspicuous mate, engrossed upon pecking at the grass.

"The tragedy of the peacock is his tail," he observed, and added words of Hebbel's: "'We mortals lack either the cup or the wine.'"

Her glance of understanding at that was intolerable to him. She threw a small stone at the indifferent hen.

"Punishments seldom fit the offence," he remarked.

"No," she replied hastily. "And it is so difficult to judge of offence. That is what I forgot last evening—when I spoke. I have had nothing but kindness all these years—from one standpoint. I haven't been beaten or in any way coerced," she explained ruefully. "It is all a question of understanding, of temperament; of how far one sees—and how far one can be blind. . . . I was the first to be wrong from one standpoint, because I thought I knew——"

"Don't explain. . . . I wrote you a letter once; but you would not have read it; that is to any purpose. So I tore it up. Society is in an experimental stage. We've experimented with women; and mind you, the price doesn't fall on them alone: It has been a poor thing for us to consign the bringing up of our children to women with starved minds. It was one of the reasons which led me to prefer the role of a prodigal son."

"Ah!" she said. She could understand that now. And after a silence: "I am beginning to see things."

He asked for no further elucidation, but was led to wonder how far that seeing might take her, in consideration of her general honesty of outlook, and her faculty for refusing compromises. He found it impossible to think of her in that abominable little villa for the rest of her life. But Trask stood solid and incontrovertible at the door of it.

PART V
ANTHONY

" The little God of Love is generally represented as a child ; and rightly, perhaps, considering the erratic character of his ways among the human race."—*Ed. Carpenter.*

1.

BEFORE a desk, with a glass screen mahogany mounted, which stretched the length of a room at the end of a long passage, sat the young man whom Jane had known in his boyhood as Anthony Carmichael Wilson. Though the desk was large, the room was small ; but it was dignified by the fact that it was his private room. On the glass pane of the door was written Mr. Wilson, in sloping black letters ; and clerks, coming from doors opening on the length of the passage, entered it throughout the day to obtain his immature signature to all sizes of documents and letters.

Mr. Wilson experienced a pleasing sense of authority as he passed through the door every morning, and as he signed the letters at intervals during the day. It evaporated on the closing of the door and the departure of the clerks. It was evident that he did not suffer from personal arrogance, or a desire to swagger.

An ingenuous modesty appeared his most likeable characteristic. He attended to his work punctually and faithfully with no concern either to shirk it or to be actively discontented with it. He was not known to take any interest in the arts, politics or religion apart from those decollated aspects introduced to him in the daily paper. His eyes, which were singularly blue and clear, constantly sought at the window the free waving of a branch of plane tree seen against the merciful grant of a patch of sky. If the sun warmed it he would draw a map from his pocket, mark the route of a walk he would go at the week-end, and stretch himself with satisfaction at the expectation.

With his slimness and fresh colouring, and the clear and casual glance of his eyes, he had preserved something of that simplicity by which one could trace upon the figure of the man the lineaments of childhood.

Through the monotonous ordering of his days, in which his share of work appeared so immaterial, so impersonal, so much of a huge mechanical process, this fresh candour had been preserved. One deemed it must be precarious, there seemed

to be so little to prevent it from being swamped at any hour. So little of positive or determined to meet any onslaught against it.

His education had been expensive but had left him poor : drilled to suspicion rather than to human charity. That it was safest to suspect people had come hardly to the natural ingenuousness of his temperament ; he attained it by not entering into any but superficial relationships with those he met. His starved affections sought assuagement in things of his weekly rambles : the finding of the first primrose ; the gleam of a white bluebell in the azure pools of Spring. If at such hours he was stirred by the sense of an immortal spirit inhabiting his body, he did not allow himself to come to any terms of recognition with what he had been trained to suspect might be an unprofitable companion. The reaction against sanctimoniousness had reached that opposing extreme where it was considered bad form to acknowledge the existence of spiritual hungers.

He knew that as a man he must make money : Virtues must be paying virtues.

His education of being made a gentleman had included surprising values. It was indecent to speak with enthusiasm about anything except sport, food and drink ; but decent to joke about sex. It was "the thing" to attend church—preferably Anglican—occasionally ; but to hunger and thirst after righteousness was also a form of enthusiasm which was taboo.

He believed in a vague way that he knew the value of women, from his first unbelievable initiation at school, through the accepted dogma of the subject ; from the classics down to the last licentious tale regaled at smoking concerts ; functions which he attended with sobriety for business reasons.

When he recalled his mother his fancy ranged to a picture of an angel which had hung in his nursery : a floating figure with white pillows of cloud beneath, convenient to fall upon in the event of her beginning to drop through space. Not that he thought of this possibility, which savoured of irreverence ; and he was as shy of that as of reverence.

Like other men of similar education he was able to look unmoved upon prostitute women of the streets, and human wrecks which he saw upon the highways. He was morally paralyzed.

On an afternoon in spring he sat fidgeting on the high shiny office stool. It usually provided, with other accessories—want of oxygen, columns of figures, stupidity of clerks—sufficient of discipline to send him out at closing time so tamed of blood, so listless of idea, so blind to any enterprise, that he was content to buy an evening paper and catch the train which took him twelve miles out of London to his rooms; kept and furnished with ill-favoured devices by a tart straight-backed woman of overpowering respectability, and to attempt refreshment by her more ill-favoured cooking. But to-day the plane branch danced tantalisingly against a sky of lucent blue, and laughing voices seemed to call to him, suggesting possibilities which he battled with unsuccessfully.

"Damn!" said he; and concentrated his resentment on an almanack on the opposite wall. The arithmetical figures on it were small and of negligible attraction, but above them was a figure which he found increasingly compelling; the figure of a girl with scarlet drapery, which exposed a swelling breast and the slender length of a leg. Wilson dragged this figure from the nail on which it depended, tore it across and flung it vehemently into the waste paper basket.

Thereon he again concentrated on less disturbing figures. The plane branch threw a flickering shadow on them. This perhaps caused him speedily to forget them, and their importance to the firm which employed him. He began to whistle; to think of his favourite hill-top; and of the young birches in the Surrey woods which led to it.

When a clock struck six he glanced ruefully upon columns of unrelated figures, and again at the dipping plane branch. He stretched himself and yawned; and counted the money in his pockets. He was exact about his weekly expenditure. He decided to "blew" five shillings; and set out westwards to find a restaurant which should accord with his mood and purse.

He wore a dark blue suit, well-cut, a vivid blue tie, which Millie had given him, and square-toed brown boots purchased with an eye to tramping. He decided to go towards Soho; which he did with some determination, in order to avoid directly meeting the challenging eyes and smiles of girls.

After hesitating before several obscure entrances, he entered one in a narrow street, where strange-featured people passed, and un-English children played about doorways.

He went with a half-nervous, half-assured manner into a room lit by four flaring gas jets. Three out of seven tables were occupied by diners, whose appearance he designated as Bohemian. A stout waiter in a grubby evening suit brought him the menu. One could obtain a three course dinner for one and ninepence, coffee included. The first item on the card was "Cocky and Leeky." As he smiled over this an uproarious laugh came from the next table, round which were seated six men talking volubly. The proprietor, who sat at a table in the window reading a newspaper, until the time arrived for him to mix salads, got up, removed his glasses and went to the table of the six men. He looked down upon them with an air both pompous and infantile.

"What's this?" demanded a man, with a notable nose, and a face lined with the records of a life which had probably refused few experiences offered to it. He pointed to the "Cocky and Leeky."

The proprietor was a man of few words, of necessity, he had never attempted to master more English than would enable him to run his restaurant until such time as he had made enough profits to return to his beloved Switzerland. He replaced the glasses on his nose and fetched an old volume from the mantelshelf; which it shared with two blue glass vases with paper flowers, and an A B C time table.

He took the book to the men and said: "Dis is Vebster, dictionnaire. I vaste one hour—one hour mind you—looking in here for cock and leek. I know it is not the fowl, so I look up Cox. It is not that. Then I look up—c o q—You have coquette——"

"No, we haven't," interrupted a young man facetiously.

The proprietor stared at him admonishingly, and went on: "No, it is not coquette. And I hear you say, cocky and leeky—What do I write then?"

"Webster is an old dictionary."

"Vell, dere was leeks before dere vas dictionnaires."

"True, my host. Well, next time you try——"

The entry of more people made the conversation inaudible to Wilson, but presently he caught the end of it.

"That's been a long discussion over nothing," said he of the lined and humorous face.

For the first time the blank solemnity of the proprietor's expression wavered. He leaned over the table confidentially:

"Dat is ever the safest thing to argue about." He then glared at Wilson—his habit with strangers to the café—and passed to the small counter in the window, behind which a lift was being continually hauled to the surface by a silent dark-haired woman, and started with tremendous concentration his evening task of mixing salads.

Wilson glanced at the six men near, envying them their jolly comradeship. He did not make friends easily. At the table in front of him a Frenchman sat with his young wife. They, too, faced each other with a free and delightful air of intimacy. She was not pretty, but her figure was neat, and trimly set off by her clothes ; and she possessed those sparkling mannerisms by which French women attest their sense of being an indispensable part of a man's enjoyment ; and which English women, mainly out under the sufferance of man, are too constrained to emulate. Wilson envied them also. He had known no free companionship with women since he had played in a garden with a little girl ; so many years ago now that he had forgotten what she was like.

He would have liked to come here every night, he thought ; and get to know the six men, and the young Frenchman and his wife. With the ardency of the spring day upon him, and the unaccustomed briskness of the little restaurant, the difficulties of easy comradeship disappeared ; even the great lesson of his education—playing for safety—was obscured ; almost he saw, at the moment, that it was, in essence, a deadly game ; at all events he granted deadening.

He ordered a half flagon of Chianti ; and began to acknowledge the soft half-glances of the young French wife ; who invited him to smile at her so that she might arouse her husband's jealousy, and provoke him to one of those distracting love scenes which kept alive the glamour of their relationship.

Wilson began to think of his own marriage. He would probably get a rise next year, and might reasonably begin to think of a home of his own. There was Millie—he knew very little of Millie—but he thought she would be pleased to marry him. And she wanted looking after : evidently had a pretty rotten time at home. He thought of children ; and was thankful that he had kept himself clean, for their sakes ; he hardly considered Millie here. He cherished no high illusions of love ; but it was pleasing to reflect on himself as being

master of a house, and head of the wife. Before the thought of children he became humble again.

By eight o'clock the restaurant was full. Everything moved to light and gaiety. Wilson lingered over his coffee and an Indian cheroot which one of the partners in his firm had given him. He had no wish to return to his rooms, neither to drop in to a music-hall. He generally spoke of music-halls as "pretty rotten." That was a safe card, and he had little desire to see girls dancing; and no active sense of enjoyment in colour, or form, or lighting; save that which he found out of doors. Music-halls were mixed up in his thinking with Jezebels and whispered dangers. He wasn't taking any risks.

He lounged out of the place about a quarter to nine, and wandered through some of the streets which form an amazing behind-the-scenes to our public thoroughfares. Presently he came upon a square whose immense arc lights obliterated the pure duskness of the deepening night.

The steely brightness confused him. He focused his eyes on a passing face. It was startlingly distinct; with large eyes heavily lashed and underlined, and red mouth. He looked into the eyes; and his confused blood ran more swiftly. The woman touched him on the arm.

His face lost its boyish aspect. The eyes narrowed until they could see nothing of the cool and distant heavens; only the swaying figure of the woman, which moved a little in front of him. She turned and looked again.

He followed slowly.

At that moment a voice said in his ear, "We make our own hells." The words were spoken deliberately but without emotion. He turned. No one appeared to be regarding him. A small man had just passed. Had he—?

A tremendous revulsion overtook him.

Under the light which beat scorchingly on the pavement he was still aware of the lingering woman; he became also aware of many others: wrecked faces, grimacing and cruel, with twisting figures: he saw them with a fearful accuracy. We make "our own hells"—The words struck at him, so that he hurried from the place of dire illumination. A shrill laugh followed him; whipping him into a more precipitate stride, while his thoughts struggled incoherently with annoyance and mortification.

Presently a cool wind flicked him ; he had come to the river. He leaned over the stone parapet. The tide ran swiftly, dark and flecked with lights.

As he gazed upon it the water exercised its ancient healing power ; the tumult of his mind subsided. The silence and integrity of the night was borne upon the flowing tide, which merged, in his quickened perceptions, into a River of Life, brimming with the tragic, mysterious generations of men.

At the sound of a clock striking he turned away in the direction of Charing Cross. As a child brushed against him he was aware of losing the last shred of his annoyance against the unknown person who had interposed between himself and the loss of his vaguely defined intention of being a decent fellow.

The slow train he caught stopped at every station on his way home ; he was tired and cold when he reached his rooms, and went up the stuffy squeaking staircase to his bedroom. The window of the room was shut ; the landlady insisted on shutting it during the day. He pushed it open and looked out. On the mean row of villas, and the ill-kept small gardens behind, the assuaging shadow of the night fell. Beyond, a small hill rose to a sky of thick-spread stars. He had chosen the rooms because of that hill, and paid for a season ticket, in excess of what he could relatively afford, for the chance of having it near enough for sight.

A portrait of his mother hung over the bed ; she looked down remote and saintly upon the spotted shabbiness of the room. His glance on her was hurried ; he felt upon himself the taint of the grimacing woman ; the nakedness of the blinding arc lights . . .

A River of Life . . . His dim faith linked his mother with the words. He blew out the guttering candle and got into the narrow bed with its lumpy flock pillow.

His youth being sound he slept deeply, undisturbed by the early chorus of birds that sing in May. Throughout his sleep he was aware at intervals of the moving of a great tide : Flowing and passing ; flowing and passing——

2.

“Conventionalities are at length as bad as impurities.”—*Thoreau*.

“What are they going to do ?” yawned Needham. He spoke to his wife who was buttoning a pair of long gloves.

"Haven't any idea. He's sure to give us a good feed, and you'll be safe for a drink."

"Is he doing it to please Jane?"

"Heaven alone knows!"

"I suppose there will be cards in the house? Some of us might get a game of bridge."

There was the sound of a car outside. Phyllis reached out for an elaborate cloak lying near. A parlourmaid, pink of face, and with a smart muslin apron and cap, helped her mistress with the cloak and enquired if she should sit up for them. Mistress and maid purred in harmony among the evidences of lavish expenditure. The preoccupation of their lives was to possess money to spend on clothes and food. They dressed up their demand very prettily. People said of the mistress: "She seems very nice": Of the maid, "What a nice, superior girl." Nice was the word. To be less than nice was to belong to the army of "poor things"; to be more than nice was to belong to the suspected.

Before the flattery of their glances the master of the house became resigned to leaving the crackling fire, his own brand of whisky, and the new *Sketch*. He manfully relinquished these things to give his wife the chance of parading the splendid cloak, the gleaming dress, the diamond buckle that clasped the velvet round her throat.

They entered the car. It was upholstered in a delicate fawn, and smelt of wine and cigars, powder and scent. The chauffeur was clean-shaven and impervious. He, too, liked the feel of surplus money; desired it on occasion to a point of savagery where if murdering his master had included stepping into his shoes, he would assuredly have swung between To Be or Not To Be. His manner was invasive under its imperturbability.

He had been told to drive to Mr. Gallup's. There, in a mood vacillating between benevolence and irritation stood the host, asking final desperate questions of his niece.

"Do these people talk?"

"Don't undo that button again, dear, or it won't last out the evening."

Gallup gave a last jerk to the button in question. He felt uncomfortable physically, and at sea mentally; but he had considered it necessary that Jane should consort with *le monde qui s'amuse*. His difficulty, now that the hour had arrived, was that they didn't amuse themselves.

"I don't know what on earth we are going to do with them," he reiterated. "There are only three things they interest themselves in—golf, bridge and motoring. I don't know anything about any of them."

"They like a good supper."

"We can't turn it on at once."

"No. Well, they like to laugh at suffragettes and flying! You can turn those on. And there's ju-jitsu, and mixed bathing."

A bell rang. Needham and his wife invaded the room: stormed it, Gallup felt. He aggressively prosperous, with his "Hullo! we came early, being the family." She with a splendour of rustle, colour, and perfume, a little perfunctory kiss of Jane, and "Well, uncle, you'll have to indulge in a new dress suit, won't you? Will there be cards for gamblers like Charles?"

"We thought of ju-jitsu," said Gallup; and wondered whether Needham really found marriage with this glittering woman a satisfactory thing.

"We were discussing the immoralities of the respectable before you came, Mrs. Charles," he said blandly. "And wondering whether the next generation will have the courage to abolish them."

"How nice!" Phyllis sparkled; tapping a beaded foot on the fender and displaying a rose-coloured petticoat. Her acquaintance with erotic novels gave her the sense of being free of the prejudices of the humdrum; while she was upheld in all situations by the comfortable assurances of the wealthy.

He turned towards his sister who came with Trask: Susan in successful black; with her half-pathetic smile, and the appeal of her faded blue eyes. Jane succoured Trask: helping out his halting remarks; still bent on presenting him as a man of hidden reserves.

Gallup marvelled; to the point of deeming her fanatically faithful.

The disharmonic gathering was shaking down into something resembling harmony. As with well-trained dogs suspicions were kept at sniffing point. Men talked of golf, motoring and bridge; women of dress, servants and theatres.

Gallup felt that his niece did little to lessen the feeling of insecurity in the room. Her eyes, direct when they lifted, stood off from any friendly nearness. "And that's too bad

of her," thought he ; for had he not essayed this venture to interest her in the common communications of man ? He saw, too, that her sense of the necessity for a mask to mislead the inquisitive, detracted from her personality, robbed her of that forthrightness which had first captured his affection. "She'll end by grimacing with the rest of 'em," he thought ruefully ; and fussed out into the kitchen to tell Mrs. Cane to announce the supper ten minutes earlier than he had ordered.

"You have a fine library here," said Ogilvie-Stewart to his returning host.

"Do you read ?"

"A little. Haven't time. Business. Then I am a married man."

Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart and Phyllis were chattering fashions. Each disliked the other. Their talk came in gushes, punctuated by strangled smiles. Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart scored over Mrs. Needham with the possession of a baby, though she owned to envy of the other's car.

"I wonder if a car is as expensive as a baby," she murmured. "Your sister has never seemed quite the same since she lost hers. I don't see very much of her. She is so pre-occupied with her home ; and so devoted to Mr. Gallup."

The talk in the room was everywhere as perfunctory and tentative ; its one bond that Gallup was a rum fellow, and it would be a relief when the late supper was served.

Presently, out of one of the uneasy silences of drawing-rooms, Gallup blurted out, "Jane, say that thing of Brown-ing's : 'Confessions.'"

"Why ?" she asked, moving to him.

"I've done nothing to amuse them, and I'm their host."

"It isn't amusing."

"Doesn't matter. Give them something to talk about," he muttered.

She would not disobey him, and gave them the short, impetuous thing ; regaining in the telling the unconscious presentation of herself which had occasioned Gallup's naming of her years ago.

Constrained applause followed ; while Mrs. Arrobus asked, "My dear Jane, couldn't you learn something more suitable ? There is a poem 'The Women of Mumbles Head'—I believe there is a real Mumbles Head"

"Won't you recite, Mr. Gallup?" entreated Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart. "We all know how clever you are, though you won't join our literary society."

He glanced at her maliciously, and wondered if his memory would serve. Anyway it would be worth the attempt. He jumped up and declaimed: "'Back! Make me a space round me, you kid-gloved rotten-breathed paralytic world, with miserable antics mimicking the appearance of life. Do you think your smooth-faced Respectability will save you? or that Cowardice carries a master-key of the universe in its pocket? Do you grab interest on money and lose all interest in life? Do you found a huge system of national credit on absolute personal Distrust? O England, do I not know thee—as in a nightmare tied and bound? When I see the struggle, the fear, the envy, the profound infidelity (so profound that it is almost unconscious of itself) in which the moneyed classes live. When I see the sea, spreading of infidelity, of belief in externals, in money, big guns, laws, views, accomplishments, cheap goods—O England, whither strangled, tied and bound—whither art thou come?'"

The applause that followed was more restrained than before; while Jane commented: "It is no use after that for him to pretend he is anything but an idealist."

Was the fellow trying to insult them? they questioned: but decided that he was probably "having them on." The men guffawed, while a woman simpered "Poor old England."

Then Joseph opened the door and announced the supper as being served.

At last the gathering became united: women sparkled as men filled their glasses; and men glanced at each other as at confederates who had done the cute thing in coming: the wine was undeniable.

Over dessert their host rose and addressed the company as "*Omnium gatherum*"; which they accepted under the faith engendered by his choice of wines.

"My brother is a brilliant man," Susan was saying to the man on her left. With a sigh, "I suppose they are always a little peculiar."

The fleshy man who sat by her was not judged peculiar; (save perhaps by the gods) he half nodded at Mrs. Arrobus

and turned towards Gallup, engaged with Ogilvie-Stewart in denouncing English methods of education.

"Look at your elementary schools, with their wretched little victims half starved and over-worked, and a large number of them half-timers. Forced to learn smatterings of things unrelated to any known purpose of their existence."

Nobody knew anything about elementary education; they had imagined it to be all right since the new education bill. They prepared, however, to disagree with Gallup when his attack shifted from national to university methods. The fleshy man caught the tag of a sentence from a dissentient murmur around: "They go there to learn the last art of dressing their parts."

He could not agree to this. "Our public schools and universities are right enough," he asserted. "Look at the country; it's all right. I never was keen on spending money on national education; it has only made the masses discontented and not fit for their work."

Now that they were fed and wine the company had no objection to dallying with these serious aspects of civilization. They quoted their favourite evening paper's views, and became sententious or disputatious according to temperament.

Occasionally books were mentioned: Mrs. Humphry Ward's with assurance; Shaw and Wells were nervous names with the women, perhaps opening up a charge of being not quite nice, if named with enthusiasm.

The long line of Gallup's mouth twitched once or twice, there was a dangerous flicker in his eye. He had forgotten that there were people who spoke as falsely as this; were as flaccid, as complacently idiotic. England was assuredly decadent, he decided, if its middle classes had become as inert as he here discovered them.

His eyes wandered to Jane, sitting next to that omniscient young man Godfrey Thomas, manager of a nefarious insurance company of wide repute and stability. Every feature of Thomas' face drooped, as though saddened by the apathy which was upon him. Jane's face made in opposition a shining contrast; her eyes engaged him steadily, a slight half-smile lifted her mouth.

His weary and pontifical voice droned of classicism in music. Gallup strained his ear to Jane's reply.

"It is refreshing to remember that no one has ever dared to call God classical," she replied.

Gallup was reconciled to the sacrifice of his evening. Jane was playing up; was his variable Iris again. Even the life-weary Thomas smiled, though convinced how useless intelligence is to women, who lack the wisdom to employ it to ends of any value. Their best chance was to be actively maternal; and he understood that Mrs. Trask had no children. He dismissed her with forbearance as Mrs. Arrobis led the ladies from the room.

"Was everything all right, sir?" asked the anxious Joseph, as the door closed on the last guest.

"Yes; everything that was in your hands, and your wife's. Bring a bottle of the '75 into the library."

"Is that a half-bottle of the well-beloved?" queried his niece.

Joseph took the hint and brought a half-bottle; while Gallup said: "You're a diplomatic woman. And no one to practise your art on but a middle-aged relative."

"A very dear and comfortable one."

"Yes, safe and comfortable; if you can make up your mind you've reached that stage."

"I suppose we sometimes reach stages without making up our minds to it."

"If you do that you are apt to be swept from them."

"I suppose that might be," she said slowly.

Again he was confirmed in what he had tried not to believe, that her essential genius lay in a highly developed womanhood; its material the man and the child. Failing that—treasure poured out to blind ends and crossed purposes? Or that other alternative, the devil to pay.

"Ah! well, Jane; 'the world goes its way, idiotically, majestically, inevitably—to the devil.'"

"It will never get there."

"Where do you suppose it will get?"

"I haven't really begun to think," she said. "Perhaps we don't, until we have left off feeling much."

He poured out the '75 with dejection.

"Ancient tragedies were the wisest," he remarked. "They were concerned with death; your modern tragedies concern themselves with life."

"It is a step along the path of courage."

"Ah! my romantic Iris; I wish you were not so invariably right in your apprehensions. Courage is a dangerous virtue—morally; perhaps we have not lost it physically."

"Did you admire Mrs. Ogilvie Stewart?"

"I should, when I was twenty-five. She appears to me now even more orbitless than most women."

"Orbitless? I suppose that is possible."

"Very possible. Do you remember what Lord Eldon said of Milton's Satan: 'A damned fine fellow, I hope he may win'? I've been feeling like that."

"Why did you ask them?"

"For your sake. No one can afford to live to oneself at your age."

She considered it. "No, I expect that is true. I've sometimes felt lately that I'm—not making myself honestly."

"Collision is good for the mind even when painful. Now we have suffered it let us join the immortals! . . . *Namque deos didici securum agere ævum; Nec, si quid miri faciat natura, deos id Tristes ex alto cœli demittere tecto.*"

"I can't follow——"

"You might have done if you had stood to our agreement, and taken a pass in classics instead of attempting one in life. Roughly, it means that the gods don't bother themselves about things in general, but are wise enough to prefer lives of careless ease. Let us take a leaf out of their book—ancient version—modern ones no good. Are you tired?"

"No, go on talking. I've never forgotten what you told me about a Griffin. I've wanted to have one to tea ever since."

After she had gone to bed he reflected that he was past the age to deal out romance to a young and adorable woman starved in the emotions. He judged her tenderness to him proved how starved; and was reminded of one of Villiers' heroines—a female Prometheus whose heart was devoured by a goose.

3.

“What are we, in fact, what is our *character*, if not the condensaton of the history that we have lived from our birth?”—*Henri Bergson*.

Spring was again upon the wedge-like villa where the Trasks lived. Jane again attempted to stifle the consciousness of a continually postponed springtime of life. The preposterous inconvenient place was systematically renewed with oblations of soap and water, polish and varnish, sweepings and scrubblings. Jane and Mrs. Mears, successor of the pert Carrie, faced each other at the end of the days worn and submissive. Their arduous renewal appeared sadly unblest in face of that which was being accomplished without, with such sparkle and burgeoning, such vitality and concord. Mrs. Mears had learnt to accept such futility as inevitable. Jane looked at the cleaned surfaces and fresh curtains with the feeling: “All is ready—all that we can do. And now——”

Trask would come in preoccupied, or rather unoccupied, except for the task of meeting each hour as it came along; as though he were an integral part of the villa, wearing with no hope of reviviscence to a dejected decay.

The “Now” of Jane’s expectation shrank to eclipse; though her temperament was such that she had not yet learnt to hear the latch key turn in the door without a quickening of the pulse of some illusory hope.

Old Mrs. Trask was become increasingly ailing. Jane spent part of most days with her, which occasioned a charge of neglect from her own mother. Between the two complaining women, and the toll of the exacting house, and the difficulties of the shrinking income, the world and all that it might possibly be, and mean, to people who had time to discover, shrank in her perceptions to indefinite distances, as of those other worlds we name but cannot know. Near her was the drone of lives uninspired by any intelligently conceived purpose.

The lasting difficulty was to convince herself of any real value in the small services which were the mesh in which the hours of her life were caught.

Gallup had abandoned further plans to save her from stagnation ; the increased prosperity of his firm gave him less leisure, he was constantly from home ; one of the essential wheels in a machinery organised daily for more efficient creation of wealth.

Jane was aware of his deepening pessimism. He talked of the disintegration of English civilization ; and attributed it largely to the fact that the middle-classes had lost faith in themselves as the salt of the country. They concerned themselves with labour reforms or æsthetic culture ; and left commerce and the professions to become corrupt and dissociated from ideas.

His niece realised that he was increasingly dependent on expensive food and drink to make each day a liveable proposition. What could a man do ? Meshed also, in a society absorbed in machinery, and in getting machine-like effects from human organisms ? Faint in such atmosphere came the admonition : Be not anxious for your life what ye shall eat : For the life is more than the food.

In the clanging noises how listen to the healing music of such words ? What hope of averting the impending crash of the madly-driven wheels ?

Once he had said to her : " Women are capable of living for others ; I don't think men are, except as a collective ideal."

It was this idea of living for someone which conserved her courage. She was irremediably romantic. How less could women, born in such an age, have endured their existences ? What else could have sufficiently lightened the ceaseless drudgery of crowded rooms of upholstery and jee-jaws. Before the unhopeful silences of Ernest, and the dreary persistence of Mrs. Mears and her work, Jane still imaged, somewhere, the Radiant Lover.

Sometimes he was discovered in a book ; in a twilight hour when her husband sat at the table pulling at his pipe, and absorbed in the inevitable evening paper.

The pages of the book would be turned slowly ; the faded shade of the lamp on the table resolve into the yellow sphere of a moon, swung over tarn waters locked in age-long hills.

When a bell rang in the house she moved downstairs with still remote eyes, and opened the door with thrilled deliberation, as wondering who might stand without.

A small boy handed her a large package ; looking at her with the eagerness of childhood.

" You must be tired carrying so large a parcel," she said.

He was unused to words of consideration at back doors, but he was too young to have lost faith in human beings and said gallantly, " That ain't too much for me, miss. Good evenin' ! "

She stood looking into the darkness until his footsteps, brisk and clattering, were lost upon the air. So starved she felt of the brave qualities of humanity that she closed the door reluctantly.

When she was come to the hall another bell rung. Ernest called her.

" I expect that may be a man I met in the train—can't remember his name—I asked him to come in one evening."

She opened the other door. The breath of adventure was upon her ; the evening air was chilly sweet with Spring.

A young man stood in the porch ; he had no covering on his head, which was remarkably fair. He half put his hand up as though to take a hat off, and smiled boyishly and nervously.

He followed Jane into the lamp-lit dining-room, where Trask and he exchanged greetings.

" My wife," Trask said.

The young man turned and looked at her.

" Anthony ! "

" Jane ! "

They were shaking hands. The colour rose a little in their faces. Each was catching hold of the child who had been ; each was looking for the companion child.

" You know each other ? " asked Trask, in the even voice unquickened with surprise.

Wilson genially banged him on the back. " Once, very long ago—That is how you always began them," he turned to Jane ; " through a tall and scrubby hedge I plucked up courage to ask if she was well. I was a small boy, seven ; and she told me she was ten ; but she did not box my ears."

Jane was marvelling to think how long ago it was. Longer than any measure of time : one of the happenings that are so old that they can never be lost.

"What you said was 'Are you all wite?' " she corrected.

He laughed. "You always had a wonderful memory; unless you concocted the stories you used to tell me. Some of them make me nervous now."

He sat at the table with Trask, and pulled out a pipe which he filled from a pouch embroidered by Millie. She noticed that his hands were of nervous make, with delicate nails. It seemed to her absurd to see him with a pipe; she conjectured his use of it as being one of convention rather than pleasure; as schoolboys pretend to enjoy raspberry-leaf tobacco.

Could it be true that she was but three years older than he? His smooth face bore no signs of experience. His eyes were limpidly blue, his mouth closed indeterminately under a fair moustache.

He spoke of his business. "A rotten game, but one had to earn a living." His voice took on a grating tone, which he had learnt to employ in the office to disguise nervousness. Once, when he laughed out suddenly, Jane recovered the little boy of the larch strip. He spoke with enthusiasm about the walks he went at week-ends. He did not speak with enthusiasm of people. Not having much faith in himself he had little in others.

"I chop the wood twice a week, it gives me exercise," Trask said presently, getting up from the table and stretching out muscular arms; glad of any opportunity for manual labour, which had it been his means of livelihood might have meant the deliverance of his soul. His parents' ambition to make of him a man of commerce was as satisfactory in result as an attempt to make a carrot climb a wall. He had no notion why the wall was unclimbable; being set against it, and seeing others manœuvring it successfully. He knew he worked long hours, was honest, and did not waste his money: therefore some deep injustice of circumstance must underlay his decreasing business. As the wood flew up and around, in the small lean-to against the outer wall of the kitchen, a dogged obstinacy settled upon his face at what he termed his continued ill-luck.

Upstairs the sound of the chopping beat upon the talk and the silences. Everything in the room seemed very defined, very accentuated.

When Trask left the room Jane had lifted her eyes on Anthony with the quick light which suddenly beams in children's eyes. For a moment he, too, looked on her with entire absence of self-consciousness. No such selfless look had passed between him and a woman since he had played with her under the larches. A few weeks of school-life had stolen his capacity for such.

He also found it surprising that the difference in their ages was only three years. There was that in her face, in spite of the candid eyes, which he did not associate with youth. Perhaps it was patience ; a quality connected in his mind with poverty or suffering. But she was not poor, as one considers poverty, and why should she have suffered ? He hated to think of anyone suffering.

" I expect you have done a lot more than I have," he hazarded vaguely.

" Yes ? " she questioned.

" You are married ? "

" Yes," she said again.

He wondered, simply, if she was glad to be married.

" What are you going to do ? " she asked.

" Do ? I'm managing clerk to Harford's. They're big people ; I suppose I shall stay there." The metallic tone was in his voice again ; his face appeared insignificant.

" Is it interesting ? "

" Not my part. I'm always correcting invoices, seeing to orders being sent out, and checking correspondence."

She glanced at him fearfully. " Won't it be possible—one day—to work for something different—better than money ? We work and work—and we don't live——" Her halting, urgent speech dropped into silence.

Anthony was embarrassed. He never attempted to envisage a Utopia, hardly a world different from the one he knew ; which he usually regarded as quite a decent sort of world, except that he would have liked more money to exploit its chances of pleasure—simple ones at that.

Jane pursued her reflections : first, of Anthony as he had impersonated heroes in the larch strip, and now immured, like Oliver, in an office whose work offered no chances for the expression of individuality or personal impress—the chances which dignify work and life. There were hours

when she regarded the death of her child as a desirable escape from an apparent destiny of unprofitableness.

She sought Wilson's face again: "I once saw modern commerce described as 'swindler's algebra,'" she said.

He had begun to fidget under her continued silence; he said with relief, "Jolly good, too." His vivid blue eyes looked into hers.

Again a warmth suffused their faces.

He asked, "And if the swindler's algebra could be swept away what should we do then?"

"I—I don't know." To smother her sense of blankness, and also a sense of unwarrantable confusion, she asked hurriedly, "Were you thinking of what Nietzsche says, that we must cease asking ourselves what we would be free *from*; our question must be: 'What we would be free *for*?'"

"No, I wasn't. I don't read much, you know. Wasn't he the mad fellow who wanted to abolish religion, and put a superman in its place?"

"He was—very tragic. And very wise, often."

"Of course I'm an awfully ignorant beggar," he remarked deprecatingly.

They were silent, driven into a recaptured past where once more they were wandering children, in a world where no one could explain the rules. For the deity money, which oppressed their lives, they experienced the regard which went hand-in-hand with contempt. Since it *was* the ruling tyrant—The burden of the age was upon them, with its pessimistic and nugatory acceptances.

She was also stricken with the fear of having no personal freedom left; of having helped to destroy it herself. Her up-bringing, with its insistence on the woman finding her only interests in service to a man's arrangements, had blinded her to the resources of her own life. Gallup had joined hands with her mother over this one thing, that if she expected to exercise her individuality—then Heaven help her! She being a woman. The quality by which she might be allowed to express personality, and remain a nice woman, was charm. To express it by any principles of conduct, other than conventionally accepted, was to be brought up against that Heaven help her!

"Would you like to borrow some of my books? I owe most of them to my uncle," she suggested.

"I should," he said.

"Tell me what you did at school and college."

The narrative was a bald one. He had taken no prizes, except those won in sports, and his modesty prevented him mentioning these. His 'Varsity days proved as tame in the telling; though once he blushed unaccountably—her eyes were very direct—as he recalled an incident which led him for the moment to wish her a man, when, instead of embarrassment, they might have become more intimate over what was, after all, an exceedingly funny incident.

Again his boyishness reinvested the room with the sensation of vitality and warmth.

"I expect you could still tell fairy tales," he said, aware of a look of hers which sought to penetrate the surface of him, and to discover how far the boy Tony had grown.

"I expect I should only be satisfied with real ones now."

For that he had no answer. He shied at imaginative allusion; laughing away the spiritual in himself, and frowning away the animal; afraid of their power. He attempted to maintain the balance of a self whose stability was a matter of constant small inhibitions. He feared that if the balance of that safe Anthony was upset one of the others might conceivably run away with him.

He left soon after Trask came upstairs. He said it had been very jolly coming, and he would look them up again soon. He went out with the light springy step of one accustomed to walking.

"Funny coming across her again," he mused as he went, and gathered up his impressions of her. She presumably had no children, which seemed a pity. She was rather pretty, and of course, clever. What were those words of Nietzsche, about asking ourselves what we would be free for? Recalling them, it came to him, as a surprise, that he might be unprepared for freedom. He was honest when he came up against his Self; but he did so rarely. The modesty of his youth was in danger of being eclipsed by the complacency which accompanies unthinking living.

He was glad at the resumption of so old a tie; and determined that it should not be long before his next visit. Meanwhile he must stick to some reading.

For the time he had forgotten Millie.

As for Jane she groped down the irrevocable years for a half obscured identity. Between sleep and waking she moved again in the House of the Avenue of Roses. The large moon hung outside the long window ; in the wood were innumerable shadows and stirrings. Her feet passed with the old bewilderment upon the rolled gravel of the carriage drive. Beyond the gate monsters still lurked ; and a voice passed, crying, " You can't get blood out of a stone."

4.

" How sad it would be if the Lord of a thousand chariots should conduct himself lightly in the Kingdom."—*Lao Tzu*.

Wilson had forgotten by the morning that one might be unprepared for freedom. The word had been suspect in his mind, shadowing forth hair-brained, inconsequential fellows unable to appreciate the necessity of the taboos and restrictions of civilisation. For himself, he had accepted those hand-lamps designed to throw just that right amount of subdued and oblique illumination upon living which restricted one's sight to the limit of their reflection.

The hand-lamp of religion had provided him with an insurance against personal moral responsibility. The social hand-lamp enabled one to sit at rich men's feasts ignorant of the price in flesh and blood which went to their making. The hand-lamp of morality, for young men, turned a blank slide upon the fate of prostitutes, and showed the way to the police court if they became annoying. This lamp, as we know, sometimes shook within his grasp.

He dressed on this morning with some care ; usually he did not consider the effect of clothes, but put them on negligently, as on a person destined to be of little importance, and added his hat with the same gesture of indifference as when he hung it on a peg. He had arranged to take Millie and a friend to dinner somewhere that evening. He remembered, as he put on the blue tie, that he had kissed Millie when she gave it to him. It had been the lightest of caresses ; and Millie had made the lightest of giggling protests. He wished, as he recalled the incident, that Millie would not giggle. He did

not make it a serious count against her, nor question if giggling suggested other qualities which might prove even more trying to him : he accepted it as a rather foolish peculiarity of some women, and one which strengthened the belief that man was the head of the woman and ruler of the domestic tabernacle.

He went down to breakfast with a feeling of anticipation at the thought of the day before him : the meeting with the two girls, and the smoking concert to follow. He had asked them to dinner on an evening when he was staying in town after business hours, because there would only be the extra expense of their dinners. He calculated his small expenditures with exact care, putting by as much as he could out of his salary of two hundred and fifty a year. His father had married again, and might probably leave all his money to the new wife. His letters seemed to indicate that as he had given his son an expensive education he must now look out for himself. "He might come down with something if I got married," Wilson surmised.

His sitting-room wore a dejected and cheap look ; his breakfast also was cheap. He paid thirty shillings a week for rooms, breakfast and supper. The thin-lipped landlady bought the provisions at the lowest prices obtainable ; and Wilson did not grumble, because he supposed she was unable at the figure to cater better for him ; and he did not want to pay more. His thoughts constantly turned to a home of his own, where he could have things more to his taste. When his salary reached three hundred he deemed he might prudently think of settling down.

The inhibitions thus laid upon his youth were producing their consequences. His exact economies had blunted his sense of generosity ; he was seldom moved to give anything away. As he had decided not to run risks in living he was losing the ability to appreciate those who did ; and had begun to look upon all rebels as disturbers of peaceful existence ; persons to be generally denounced. What sex abstinence cost him was not a thing to be measured ; his chastity was so much a thing of hazard ; as though one dropped a jewel in the highway and by fortuitous circumstances it was not stolen.

The evening found him seated at a table in a glare of light opposite to Millie and her friend. The restaurant was crowded with all sizes and shapes of diners, with a few ingenuous ones

like Wilson. Five tired men with sallow faces dressed in baggy evening clothes, were tuning up on a small raised platform at the end of the room. A waiter handed Wilson the menu, with a supercilious glance at the two girls.

Their skins dulled by powder, showed lifeless under the ruthless light, as did their frizzled hair. Their half-pert, half-nervous eyes strayed across the tables with a provocative droop of eyelids at the men, and antagonistic flashes at women better dressed than themselves.

Wilson looked at the menu and looked at them. His judgments, save where his prejudices were concerned, were tolerant; he concluded that the light was beastly glaring and that Millie and her friend looked jolly tired. He hesitated between the half-crown and the one-and-ninepenny dinner. Finally he decided on the one-and-ninepenny, with a bottle of Medoc.

"Shall we have this?" he said, pointing to the lesser meal on the menu. "I haven't much time; I want to be at the Smoker by nine."

He was aware that they poked each other under the table; and was confirmed in his suspicion that women get as much out of one as possible.

"Oh! yes, of course," agreed Millie. Her friend, who she addressed as Snubby, murmured "Of course." They both wore immense hats with ribbons and flowers, and turned their necks stiffly in order not to disturb the desired tilt of these.

As the meal proceeded, and the five depressed men played musical comedy, and the bottle of claret was emptied, Millie began to dart inveigling glances at Wilson—whom they called Willie—from a pair of large dark eyes set under a projecting forehead, the result of rickets. As the face lost youthful roundness, the eyes would show protuberant; at the moment they simply appeared prominent in darkness.

He put out a foot under the table and pressed hers; while he lifted a glass of the thin wine and smiled at her sentimentally. His feeling towards her was one of extreme gentleness. She had told him that she was delicate, and that home was a dull place, where a young brother of seven usurped all the care: that her parents had lost large sums of money, which necessitated her serving in the fancy-needlework shop, out of which he had first run into her; and, finding her without an umbrella on a rainy evening, had lent her his.

She lowered her eyelids as she felt his foot, then raised them quickly and shot him a fervent glance.

A man at the next table, with an eminent nose, looked on at the little comedy with derisive eyes. He labelled the face of the young man, "not animal but inept." His conclusion upon the over-dressed, underfed girls was mainly a reversal of that judgment. The young man's voice fell agreeably on his ears, it betrayed an expensive education. At the end of it, he supposed, was to be the girl with the bold eyes, and the restless red mouth, moving to small grimacing smiles. "Poor devil," thought he.

Once, meeting the young man's eyes, he had a feeling that he must know him. Wilson was also conscious of having seen before the man with the iron grey curls, and a nose which would gain respect for any face; dominant, straight in the bone, humorous about the nostrils, an enquiring nose scenting the breath of life responsively.

Conversation was not brisk at the table. The girls whispered to each other sharp criticisms of clothes and prices.

Wilson said, "Now, no whispering. Talk to me instead."

"Ah! you can't hear everything," twittered Miss Snubby archly.

Talk flagged again, while the girls endeavoured to eat as much as possible while pretending to toy with the dishes.

Wilson was not altogether sorry when the clock pointed to eight.

"I shall have to be getting along to the Smoker," he said.

"Why can't you take us?"

"No ladies admitted."

"Why?" pouted Millie.

"I don't suppose you'd like it much; it gets thick with smoke."

"And I suppose you have improper songs," suggested Snubby, with conscious daring.

Millie giggled; half glancing at Wilson, whose unvarying respect sometimes irritated her.

"Not really," he said lamely, with his eyes from Millie.

As he helped the girls with their wraps the man at the next table touched his arm.

"Is your name Wilson?"

"Yes. I know your face but I can't remember your name. Oh! cocky-leeky—it was you, wasn't it?"

Gallup put a hand through his hair. "Cocky-leeky? Ah! the little Swiss restaurant; were you there? I didn't see you."

"Yes, I was there," said Wilson; and a faint colour rose in his face, because of the voice which had reminded him that we make our own hells.

"Extraordinary how immature a few men remain," Gallup was thinking; while the two girls simpering near pulled Wilson's sleeve.

"We're going. Thanks awfully, Willie. P'raps see you Saturday. So long."

He shook hands with them, in his half-embarrassed fashion, and turned again to Gallup.

Outside the restaurant Snubby remonstrated with her friend about certain statements made at dinner: "You'll lose him if you're not careful. He could easily find out that you never went to school at Eastbourne."

"He's swallowed everything I've told him so far."

"Don't you make too sure. He's pretty cautious. Chose the one-and-ninepenny dinner, you see."

Millie's glance was vindictive; she moistened her red mouth: "He's not my only string."

"All right; go your own way."

In a deadly silence they parted. . . .

"Where do you live?" Gallup asked Wilson.

"Leasden Avenue."

"Weren't you once neighbours of Mrs. Arrobus of The Cot? You played with my niece——"

"Years ago, sir."

"You've been slow about growing."

Wilson looked at the older man, not sure what he meant.

Gallup leaned across the table; he felt in a rarely gregarious mood, and interested in the fate of this amiable young man. "What do you expect of her?" he asked, with a half-nod at the place where Millie had sat.

Wilson flushed. What did he mean? Millie was a very decent girl. It was damned impertinence!

"I—I don't know what you mean. . . . She's had an awful lot of drawbacks. Her people have lost money." He stopped; angry with himself for answering such a query.

Gallup went on impersonally. "It sometimes strikes one as odd that we often don't ask more of a woman than what

we can buy anywhere. Except that in marriage we insist upon a monopoly."

Wilson's anger fired at this abominable comment. He cursed a large multi-coloured bow which Millie had worn at the back of her hair, as having somehow lent a semblance of truth to this unpleasant man's remarks. He tore his coat from off a peg, and with a curt and furious "Good-night," left.

Gallup looked after him. "Extraordinary! Immature as a half-hatched chicken. . . . Decent boy."

Wilson, feeling very much a man, walked wrathfully to the smoking concert. He knew nothing intimately of women, and memory offered him few chances of contrast where Millie was concerned. Her meagre figure lent comparative obscurity to her befrilled and beribboned clothes; the pallor of her skin softened the dark boldness of her eyes. That women were vain, and had an irradicable affection for dress to which man was superior, was an axiom. That a suggestion should be made that Millie had anything in common with those women—The evening in the Square flashed across his mind; and the swaying woman with dark-rimmed eyes. His indignation became immense.

There were moments when he tentatively peeped at Millie possessively as Mrs. Wilson. He felt the outrage personally, and determined to cut the man next time they met.

He turned down a narrow street and passed up an obscure flight of stairs into a large low room, with sketches on the wall, and men around tables drinking ale from tankards. A man he had known at college invited him to these gatherings once or twice in the year. Wilson was flattered by the invitations. They represented his sole slight bond with art and things of the intellect. There was no necessity either to do other than enjoy the occasion, with no intrusive idea of being pleasant to men one thought unpleasant for "business reasons."

Laston, his college chum, had told him that these were the meetings of the Mad Arts Club; and he had accepted the name without question. His education had suggested that the indulgence of art was also the indulgence of a form of amiable madness.

He sat down by Laston with a grin; shedding in the easy atmosphere his half-nervous small restraints; and appearing even younger than usual.

"Still getting half-a-crown a week pocket money?"

queried Laston mockingly. Like Gallup he found Wilson's prolonged immaturity an amusing phenomenon.

On an improvised stage the balcony scene from "Romeo and Juliet" was proceeding; with the Premier cast for Romeo and a suffragist for Juliet. The burlesque had been written by a member of the Mad Arts who appeared to have retained a searching sanity. Twice Romeo had been headed off the shaky balcony by a well-directed blow from Juliet, and had been shoved on again by shouting members of the audience.

He yelled back at them: "He jests at scars that never felt a wound."

Juliet continued her harangue; bidding him defend the records of his sex, from Adam who had sneaked about the apple, down to that luminary of the law who had decided that a man may not beat his wife after nine in the evening.

"Rather playing into their hands; isn't it?" asked Wilson, meaning the suffragists. "Good thing no women admitted." He believed in letting sleeping dogs lie; and was always surprised to discover that sometimes they were awake of their own volition.

"My dear Seraph"—this had been Wilson's nickname—"what retreat have you discovered remote from the world we live in? We happen to have arrived at a day of reckoning with women. They are refusing to tell the lies we've insisted on them telling; naturally it is causing a disturbance."

"You don't believe in them voting?"

Laston fixed him with diabolical twinkling eyes. "What the devil has the vote got to do with it? It is only the label on the bottle of medicine we don't want opened; even though it is meant to be for our good. The hour has arrived when we must compound with woman. We should prefer the next generation, naturally, to bear the expense of what may happen."

Wilson remembered that he had joined in a shindy at college on the question of women being allowed to accept the degrees they had gained. The general attitude of his mind made it appear natural that women must accept certain impositions of men.

"Don't be alarmed, Seraph! Unconsciously, and by some peculiar merit, which I'm hanged if I believe you deserve credit for, you are apparently not in their debt."

Juliet, meanwhile, with a large foot planted upon the chest

of the recumbent Romeo, was rehearsing his sorry past ; and announcing that sooner than face her day of reckoning he had elected to poison himself. She descended from the stage to beg a loving-cup in which to drink forgetfulness of such sorry rogues ; and fetched it herself—ale, in a baby's bath, and placed it solemnly before the chairman.

There was hilarious talk after this ; sometimes dropping into vehement disgust of the blind stupidity of the English in art : of a nation who refused Stevens' offer to decorate St. Paul's ; and Watts' for the entrance hall at Euston ! They deserved to suffer from splenetic disorders brought about by the ugliness of existence. Were they not laughing insanely at the Neo-Impressionists ; a school of regenerators which had gained the acknowledgment and respect of Europe ? Such a nation would no doubt bring upon itself a dire and sinister fate. Having thus washed their hands of the country, they resumed their convivial appreciation of themselves ; and Laston responded to a demand for stories.

He got up on to the platform and looked round the room with sallow, sardonic face. An expression of clear vacuity came upon it, his pale eyes stared at a freize round the room, consisting of charcoal drawings of the heads of members. He proceeded to give them a sketch of his own upon the modern education of a girl : a sketch of unimpeachable humour, classic in quality. Men greeted it with the sane laughter of the mind. For an encore he returned and gave what they expected ; still with the same vacuity of expression.

The faces in front of him changed, responding to the suggested obscenity of the encore. They became animal and coarse. Wilson was aware of this. He fidgetted ; and reckoned, in the raw phraseology of his mind, that it was a bit thick. The arc lamps of the Square seemed again to glare in his sight, like a searchlight destined to confuse at unseasonable hours his moral hand-lamp.

To his temperament, naturally fastidious, such jesting, heard from school days, had wrought in him a fear of women of character, and led him to the companionship of girls like Millie ; girls who he realised, though half consciously, would not be badly hurt by such offences against womanhood.

His recognition that he had never made a stand against such things, though secretly hating them, implicated him with

the others ; discovered him on a level with those presumably acquiescing girls.

Here he remembered Jane. Jane as a little girl looking at him with searching eyes : Jane the other evening, with the same searching eyes. Perhaps if he had grown up with her—had had a sister——

“ Come back to my digs,” said Laston. “ You live such a beastly long way out.”

“ Oh, all right.” Wilson had an unbounded admiration for Laston’s cleverness. It wiped out in a moment now his distaste of that encore.

Three of them made for a tube station. It was getting late ; the long circled way to the platform was empty. Tapping footsteps overtook them ; a young girl looked up in their faces, and said with a half lisp : “ I’ve dropped my ticket. I haven’t time to go back and look for it. May I come with you ? ” Her eyes rested on Wilson half defiantly, half childishly. She was very young.

Laston gave her an easy half-wink ; whereon she glanced up the deserted tube and made a quick little pirouette before them.

Laughing together they entered the train. She sat next to Wilson ; with unerring instinct picking him out as the one most likely to believe what she might say. She talked in little rushes of speech ; her large, full mouth smiling up at him.

He paid her fare at the journey’s end, and she asked him to see her home : she hadn’t guessed it was so late.

The situation amused Laston. “ Will expect you later, then, Seraph,” he said. “ You came once before, fifth house on right, second turning from here.”

The girl slipped her hand on to Wilson’s arm. He did not lean to it.

She told him a long story of why she was coming home so late ; and asked if she might be likely to see him again.

He responded laconically. In order to remain a decent fellow he had made resolutions to meet such encounters as these. His fastidiousness, and perhaps a lack of imagination helped him to keep them. Besides, he had had supper with Millie.

The girl stopped before a house whose dingy front reared

sharp and black upon the melting depths of night. She took her hand from his arm with a little pettish movement.

"I've got a latch-key," she lisped.

Wilson looked down on her, half kindly, half repelled. He raised his hat. "It might be difficult to get in without," he said. "Good night."

5.

"... must we go on for ever scraping our faces with a sharp iron, until they are blue and spotty with manifold scrapings; and cropping our hair short to give ourselves an artificial resemblance to old dogs and monkeys...? And all for what, since it pleases not heaven nor accords with our own desires? For the sake of respectability, perhaps, whatever that may mean. Oh! then a million curses take it—may it sink into the bottomless pit, and the smoke of its torment ascend for ever and ever!"
—*W. H. Hudson.*

Wilson, in the obscure haven of his private room, made stuffily warm in winter by a grim oil-stove, and tantalisingly a place of bondage in summer by the free swaying of the plane branch, was sometimes aware that all was not well with the world outside the haven. There were strikes, whose reverberations reached the very letters he handled; there were rumours of war in the pages of evening papers; and, being tender-hearted, he did not like to read of the man-handling of women and their forcible feeding. Women were behaving idiotically, of course, so were the strikers, but something must be wrong, he concluded.

Suspicion began to creep into his acceptances of the ruling of governments; he even looked searchingly at the London police on occasion. Once or twice he bought a woman's paper in the streets. The sellers looked quite ordinary women. That surprised him. Every one that was outside that scheme of life implied in the term "playing for safety" was revealed in the vague apprehensions of his mind, as of forbidding and perhaps villainous aspect; the old villains and pirates of his school-day books.

The refinding of Jane quickened his apprehension of

rebellions going on around : Rebellions of youth against age ; of women against men ; of workers against idlers ; of individuals against officials ; strivings, kickings against the pricks, resentments, sufferings.

He began to justify some of those rebels whose break with the past had become a break of the majority. In face of the colourlessness and lack of direction in the religion of the churches, he was not surprised that people stayed away from them. The subject he had been introduced to, under the misleading heading of Divinity, had not been taught as from any standpoint applicable to his own life. It had not been suggested that there was any vital truth in the statement that to govern one's spirit was better than to rule a city. The goal of all teaching was the extreme desirability of being in the position to rule cities.

Then there were the increasing number who rebelled against respectability and its demands. There certainly was little to say in favour of respectable people. The few biographies he had read plainly demonstrated that they had always stood in the way of the masters of life and progress.

Yet he did not wish to be involved in any inconvenient price for rebellion. He was slow to talk about matters which disturbed the seeming placidity of existence. As Jane soon discovered, he had no taste for problematic issues ; and was almost as afraid of happiness as of sorrow ; of the consideration of the measure of time that was his as by eternity.

When a truth began to force itself upon him to the extent of making a personal claim, or involving a price to be paid, he got up and whistled, or lit a cigarette, or decided to go out. He constantly ran away from that Self not represented by clothes and food, the carrying out of his office work, the simple filling up of his odd hours.

He no doubt wished to be recorded as being on the side of the angels ; but the angels were still the somnolent figures of his childhood's books ; very apparently disinclined for anything so strenuous as taking sides.

He said to Jane, " You must let me be your friend." And was aware on the moment that the issues he made endeavour to avoid were those with which she would insist on coming to terms.

" I mean it," he persisted ; to fortify himself against a cautionary suggestion that she might so far take him at his

word as to impose more active demands than he might wish to carry out.

"It is what I have always wanted," he went on.

Jane thought "After all, I am here. He won't always be able to run from his Self; or from me." What she exactly meant by this she did not inquire. It was impossible that his comings and goings could continue to be these brief, somewhat constrained irruptions of himself.

Ernest's mother lived at the villa now. She was confined to one room because of a swelling of the legs which made movement painful. Her bell would ring at all hours of the day. Jane hurried at the summons at first, but became more leisurely at such requests as: "Of course you have remembered to get turnips for the mutton, Jane."

"No."

"Then Mrs. Mears must go for some."

"But we have other vegetables. Mrs. Mears is tired; and there is a lot to do."

"Then a little fresh air will do her good." The old woman glanced with malevolence at her daughter-in-law. She considered that, being a prisoner on account of ill-health, the least that the other two women in the house could do was to indulge her preferences. She also considered that she paid for such service, with her annual contribution of seventy pounds a year to the house. Also, unless her doctors' bills and treatment encroached to any extent on her capital, she would leave a sum of about two thousand to her son.

It was difficult to be patient with the old woman's absorption in food, and the resulting derangements. Jane lost temper with her on the matter of the turnips. "We're something more than walking stomachs," she said tartly.

The big flabby cheeks of Mrs. Trask hung quivering, her thick pale lips twitched; she hitched up the rug that hung over her lap, and picked up a Bible that lay near and held it up to her dim resentful eyes. By this action she affirmed the rightness of her request, and her need of consolation at the conduct of her daughter-in-law. Her life had been spent in arrangements for food, renewal of clothes, and labour in the house. She was assured of the predominance of the body here, and the safe passage of that negligible quantity the soul hereafter. Now that she could no longer work

and clothes were a matter of an occasional purchase by others, the interest of life centred in meals.

Jane, ordinarily, acknowledged the limitations of the spent body, and ministered to it with gentleness. But there were hours when a resentful Jane watched her youth shedding itself over savoury messes; saw herself, perhaps, facing an end when a steaming dish would be the chief interest of her own day. And she had always despised the story of Esau's blessing.

Anthony came in to ask if they would join him in a tramp on Sunday; and picked up a photograph of her which had been taken to send to Gallup when she was first married.

"Do you like it?" she asked dully. She envied him his limited chance of freedom; his ability, outside the walls of his office, to come and go as he chose; his opportunity at each week-end to be alone: to read, to walk, to lose himself if such was his fancy.

He looked from the photo to her; and also at his memory of the little girl of his boyhood.

"Somehow you are not like yourself," he said, with a flash of insight.

She made no reply. She acknowledged within herself a growing divorce from all she had hoped to be; and whose foreshowing was becoming less plain upon her.

She said she would ask Ernest about Sunday; and went with Wilson to the door as though to hasten his going.

"Good-bye," he said. "Mind you come, you look done-up; it will do you good." He strolled off with his hands in his pockets, the wind ruffling his uncovered hair.

"I am a married woman," she reflected, as she shut the door. It appeared necessary to insist upon the limitations of that thralldom.

The smell of the cooking dinner rose from the basement; the bell rang from old Mrs. Trask's room. She stood a moment in the cramped hall, as though considering the possibility of escape.

"Sometime—before the end—I will go—I must—somewhere—where people live—where I can live." She lifted her head upon the resolution, and went to the old woman's room.

Wilson strolled back to his rooms wondering what he should do with his evening. He wished Jane had asked him to stay.

Perhaps he would write to his father ; it was nearing Christmas, when they exchanged letters, and discovered that each was still living. He had met his father's new wife twice ; once at their marriage, and once at dinner at an hotel on their infrequent visits to London. She was a formal woman, some fifteen years younger than his father ; and, glad to find herself comfortably settled in life, made him an obedient and grateful spouse. He, getting old, and glad to have so reliable a nurse and housekeeper, bestowed upon her more consideration and affection than he had given his patient and gentle first wife. Anthony felt justified in his dislike of her.

He sat biting the end of his pen, not knowing what on earth to write about. Christmas had come round again with extraordinary celerity. . . . He would soon be thirty. He must really settle down. He recalled girls he had met at the tennis club that summer. Somehow he couldn't imagine any one of them as sharing a home with him. He had not seen much of Millie, she had gone to a seaside place with her family for most of the year ; but he was to meet her at Christmas. He was familiar with the association of a home and Millie. She had told him when they first met how glad she would be when she had a home of her own. Her unhappiness, her lack of money, her delicacy, kept his tenderness alive. He experienced no thrill at her memory, but the conjunction of her name with the thought of home made pleasant thinking.

Time was certainly pressing. He was not so indifferent to the fact as Trask, who might have been thought, by his expenditure of it, to be possessed of an eternal share of the measure with which the gods limit human endeavour.

Wilson decided that he would certainly be an engaged man by this time next year. . . .

Christmas was damp and muggy. He received three letters on the day. One from his father with a cheque for five pounds, and a formal expression of regret that the distance made it impossible for Anthony to join them. Another from Millie with a pair of socks she had knitted for him. It ran : " My dear Willie, I hope you will like the socks. Don't be late Christmas Day, I'll wait for you at the usual corner. It is sure to be beastly dull at home, and Pa and Ma going on about things as usual. Thanks very much for the pound you sent. I got the bottle of cod liver oil

as you said, and think my cough is better. How can I help getting cold, having to go to that hole of a shop in all weathers? I'll get some thicker boots if I can manage it out of the pound, but I want a new hat, though you never say you like my hats. Ta-ta, Willie dear, till Christmas Day. Poor little Millie."

Wilson frowned. If she were going to buy a hat with his pound instead of the thick boots he had insisted upon, he would be annoyed.

He opened the third letter, which was from Jane. It ended with the words "May all your ships come home."

He looked out of the window. She had the power of bringing near to him the sense of things outside his daily recognitions. What ships were these she named? For what merchandise had they set out? His thoughts left the shabby small room; and reached out to those rare hours of his life when wonder had held him. He saw the sea beating upon a rocky coast; the dawn upon a mountain he had once climbed; the great space of a cathedral where boys were singing.

As he finished his tea, which was nearly cold in the cup, a wave of depression swept him, in which the whole world seemed to stand away from him with a tremendous chilling unconcern. He appeared of no account.

He did not possess sufficient ambition, vanity, or real solicitude for the destiny of his fellow creatures, to console him at such a moment. His eyes fell upon the embroidered socks. Millie, too, was lonely: would be glad of a home of her own: was looking forward to seeing him. . . . Children must be nice about a place at times like Christmas. He should like to fill stockings for the little beggars.

He folded the socks together with lingering hands. He would allow a good margin of time for meeting Millie; it was a wretched day and she must not hang about with that cough.

It took two hours to reach her; the train was late, and he had to wait some time for an omnibus. It contained a cheerful and shabby crew. A worn young woman with a very young baby sat next to him. The baby stretched out a hand, at whose fragility he stared, and with the tenacity of the tendrils of climbing plants grasped one of his fingers. At the same time it fixed him with a gaze so limpid, an enquiry so searching that he turned away, as though it had convicted him of some dishonesty.

He waited about a quarter of an hour for Millie ; and found it impossible to scold her over her compromise in the spending of that pound : three and sixpence on cloth gaiters, which she declared were more necessary than thick boots to keep her feet warm ; and a black velvet hat with an immense bow.

" I'm sure nothing could be quieter than that," she challenged him. She was troubled by her desire to appear what Willie would think ladylike ; and her own admiration for things held to be smart.

" Isn't it rather large ? "

" Of course it is. You don't want me to wear a bonnet ? "

He pressed her arm gently against him. " You are not tall, dear. A hat like that wants a tall woman to carry it off."

She bit the upper lip of her restless mouth and said, " It is exactly like the one a duchess wore to open a bazaar. I saw it in the paper."

" But I want you to look much nicer than a duchess," he said gaily.

" You really are ridiculous, Willie."

Again he pressed her arm. " You look perished with cold. Come and have some hot lunch."

They went to a restaurant recommended to Wilson by a man in the office ; a straggling place, which under a growing prosperity kept opening new rooms by the simple expedient of knocking a hole through the wall of the next house.

Wilson had put prudence away for the day, he whispered to Millie that she wasn't to think of expense. He ordered a half-bottle of champagne. They sat side by side at a table whose appointments were bare even of things generally deemed essential. Both salt and pepper were in open glass holders without a spoon. A leather-skinned middle-aged man, who chose his dinner with glum concern, sat opposite.

Millie became coquettish under the influence of the steaming food ; the proximity of Wilson ; and the champagne. She stretched out a hand to the salt and, pressing a pinch between her finger and thumb, said with a roguish look which included the leather-skinned man, " Well ! after all, fingers were made before spoons."

The man opposite showed no sign of hearing ; but presently

called the waiter and said something to him. Whereupon the waiter removed the salt from which Millie had drawn her supply and brought a fresh one.

"Surly beast," said Wilson in Millie's ear, as he saw her pale face flush; and bent a fierce stare upon the leather-skinned man.

"Nice to have dinner in one's own home where one can choose one's own guests," he said again belligerently.

Millie smiled sideways at him; she thought Willie always knew how to put things nicely. She had had several flirtations during the summer, but the young men were not gentlemen in the way that Willie was one. But he could not expect her to wait much longer for him; and he had funny ideas about income and engagements.

The surly man left. Wilson said: "I am coming home with you, Millie. I would rather your people knew who takes you out."

She leaned to him coaxingly. "They are so disagreeable to-day; it would spoil everything, Willie. Ma thinks I ought to do more in the home; and I don't see how I can, considering I am at the shop nearly all day." Her intention was not to introduce him at home until she had "landed" him. Her quick intelligence judged that he was not the sort to go back upon his word: but until she wore a ring as pledge of that word, she feared the shock of many things connected with that home upon a young man educated as Willie had been. She stood in great awe of that education; and had not enough sincerity herself to see that Wilson's affection was of that simple and uncalculating quality which, if assured of her love, was not likely to be dismayed into fright before the deficiencies of her surroundings.

"Where do they think you are?" he persisted.

"I said I was going out with Snubby," she said; with dark eyes lifted to his.

Wilson never suspected her of lying. His suspicions were seldom personal.

What she had said to her parents was: "I know what I'm doing. If I brought him home it would spoil my chances." Her father, relieved to be rid of her, had replied: "Well, don't you be too smart! Remember wot you're about until he's made some offer in writin', or given you a ring."

She had gone from the house with a little flounce of her

new dress, and a final adjustment of the big black hat ; her eyes away from the worn mother forever handling brushes, dusters and saucepans.

Wilson and she lingered at the restaurant over a pot of tea which he ordered after dinner. It was still grey and dismal-looking without. They walked through the Green Park after ; but Wilson, though he basked under her little cajoleries, did not ask her the all-important question ; though he appeared to skirt it several times.

At the end of a quiet road where she decided he must leave her, he kissed her gently and respectfully, and was hurt that her good-bye sounded curt and irritable.

" Might be his sister," she thought resentfully, as she left him with no backward glance.

6.

Wilson did not conserve his rancour against the man who had asked him those infernally impertinent questions as to Millie. When Jane introduced him to Gallup, and suggested to the latter that the young man might like to be asked to come in some evening, Wilson accepted an invitation with the thought that if he ever took Millie there as his wife he hoped Gallup might have the grace to feel awkward.

Gallup said to him : " Come in when you like. But if I say I'm out, I *am* out, as far as people not in the house are concerned."

" All right," agreed Wilson, with his pleasant laugh.

" You go to see my niece Jane ? That's right ; she gets tired of me."

Wilson refused whisky and water ; he wanted to be at his best with this man ; whose head reminded him of some celebrity in an English literature at which he had had to swot. Who was it now ?

" Seen much of her husband ? "

Wilson hesitated. Misgivings had come to him lately about the Trasks' marriage. He would very much like to know what Gallup thought about it.

" Seems rather a stodgy sort of fellow," he began. " I have sometimes wondered why she married him."

"Ignorance," the other jerked out.

The young man looked at him. What sort of ignorance did he mean? He supposed Jane had had the usual opportunities of girls to know what she was about.

"Oh!" he said, lamely.

"If she had been a man she might have had a run—first," pursued Gallup; amusing himself with the other's perplexity.

"It—wouldn't do for them to have a run, would it?" asked Wilson; wondering what exactly Gallup meant; but assured in his mind that women must be protected from a too wide choice of experience.

"It might probably work out more inconveniently for us than the present system; which naturally as men we uphold."

Wilson puffed at a cigarette with concentration as though he were engaged in deliberating the problem proposed. In reality he was not quite sure what the problem was; but he was surprised to hear men like Gallup and Laston, men who *were* men and not strange cranks—apparently siding with unscrupulously rebellious women. How much did they really mean by it? He had no wish to be regarded as a narrow-minded conservative person. He decided at that moment to drop the term conservative, which he had hitherto attached to any political views he imagined himself to hold.

"Relationships in England are peculiarly inhuman," Gallup commented. "We have become effete: we are afraid of sex; we haven't enough brains for friendship, nor enough nerve for enmity. The commercial instinct governs all our relations; we've no interest in personalities."

"No, of course we are commercial," assented Wilson; the inner eye on that private room with his name outside the door. He would gladly have turned his back on it could any reasonable assurance have been given him that he could make a living out of the land: a vague phrase; but one he dallied with during week-end walks, looking out over ripening fields, or yards with cows and poultry. Prudence rescued him from too much regret, by recalling evil prognostications on earning one's bread by tending Mother Earth, and there were the proverbial grumbles of farmers.

He found himself continually forced to acknowledge the irrevocable bond of that private office, the rows of figures, the invoices of goods, as the one means by which he could

sustain his existence ; with its brief illuminating chance of a fortnight's holiday once a year. A damnably insufficient respite, with no power to stiffen muscles of brain and body for a fight with circumstance.

" Things generally look pretty rotten, don't you think ? " he remarked tentatively. He had been conscious lately of an active dissatisfaction with life. What had this man made of it ?

Gallup glanced at the slight figure, well knit but toneless, with the lack of resilience noticeable in men who pass their days in offices ; at the pleasant face with delicate skin starved of sun and wind. " Things are undoubtedly rotten," he acquiesced. " When one is middle-aged one evades conclusions. If you are young enough to possess any faith, you may choose to believe that when the disease of civilization reaches the limit of man's endurance it will precipitate its own doom, and that a judgment will be meted out commensurate with its failure. Then we may get another renaissance of life. If you are middle-aged you extract as much comfort as you can out of existing conditions." He tossed off the remainder of his whisky. " And the devil take the hindmost."

Wilson nodded dejectedly. His imagination was not active enough to engage itself with the spectacle of the overthrow of civilization, and was youthful enough to resist the notion of accepting a middle-aged standpoint.

" You must consult my niece if you want to learn how to become an idealist," observed Gallup. " She is a primitive by nature, and has never been able to accept the fact that laws have been evolved to save men from personal responsibility. She feels constrained to exercise moral discriminations of all kinds. So that you never know where her dangerous sense of truth will land her."

" No ; of course truth is dangerous," remarked Wilson meditatively. " If I were to tell the directors at the office what I think of some of their transactions they'd shoot me out."

Gallup looked sombrely on the ingenuous young man.

" I think Trask is good to her in his way," Wilson advanced tentatively.

" And what way do you imagine that is for a thinking, sentient woman ? " the other snapped.

The young man stared in front of him. The idea of Jane unhappily mated seriously disturbed him.

"Women are incalculable creatures," remarked Gallup. "That is their eternal snare for us. She would start me off in my old age tilting at the windmills of the day; and will probably seek to regenerate you."

"I'm reading some books of hers."

"Ah!"

"She hits out sometimes."

"Yes? We can't stand the truth from women; and perhaps that is why we seldom get it."

They parted with a laugh at this.

Gallup in front of the crackling fire, conjectured in his turn what that young man Wilson would make of life. Most men in youth handicap themselves by physical or sentimental speculations. Probably Wilson would do the latter—there was the girl with the big bow. He had done the former. He had met no such girl as his niece in youth. He again reviewed the procession of women who had laid waste his emotional life. He had invariably drunk himself stupid after their embraces.

He rang the bell.

"Bring me another siphon, and fill the decanter. I thought I told you to fill it last night."

"Yes, sir. I thought perhaps it'd last, sir."

"I've told you before not to think."

Joseph disappeared. His respect for Gallup was even stronger than it had been for his former employer, and both had found whisky necessary. "Him because he had a woman wot wasn't any good to him," soliloquized Joseph; "and now here's Mr. Gallup natrooly wants it because he feels a bit lonely." He looked on the comfortable figure of his wife with satisfaction, as she sat large and calm, knitting socks by the fire. "It's all this 'igh eddication wot unfits ladies to be wives," he thought; and was thankful he was not a gentleman.

7.

Anthony's thoughts recurred at intervals to Jane and her marriage. He much preferred to be able to take things for

granted ; not to be able to take Jane's marriage for granted bothered him.

A few evenings after his talk with Gallup he went to see her, taking back "Diana of the Crossways" which she had lent him. He had found parts of it stiff reading ; but he admired the way Redworth stuck to Diana through the book. He thought faithfulness a fine thing. He meant to be faithful himself.

Jane appeared calm, even happy, so he judged by the smile she gave him.

He handed her the book. "Thanks. Of course it's not a book you can read when you're tired. You know, you have to stick to it. I like that fellow Redworth. But I don't think Diana ought to have sold that information to the newspaper man."

"No. And I don't think she would have done it," said she. "When a man writes a book I expect he is likely sometimes to make a mistake about what a woman would do. Like we should stumble over a man's point of view."

"Your uncle says women are incalculable."

"Did he? Yes——" She was silent a moment and then added : "Some of us only wake up to life by a shock ; so perhaps our—adjustments—are incalculable even to ourselves."

"What do you mean by waking up with a shock?"

"Perhaps some of us have lived in a world which isn't like the real world ; and have been taught things that are not real—and suddenly we are pushed into it all——"

"When was that?" he asked. And regretted the question.

She did not answer it ; her eyes wandered over the row of slate roofs ; over the little gardens where clothes flapped on lines. "And so women become incredible machines," she said. "I read that term—it is true—instead of credible human beings."

A troubled look came into his eyes. He didn't want her to say this sort of thing. He had come to satisfy himself that she was not unhappy. After all, Trask was no black-guard. Anthony's demands of life were of prosaic sobriety.

"Do you want another book?" she asked, and moved to the book shelves, wondering how it was he had managed to keep so much indifference to all that lay outside his narrow way of life. Anyway, his expensive education, if it had left

him singularly uninformed, had not led him to the shabby pessimism which she had gathered often marks the final stage of the modern Englishman. Perhaps that was due to a lack of imagination ; and to the fact that his emotional nature had never been roused : the lack of colour in his speech taught her that.

He watched her : that dark hair of hers was very nice ; did it still curl when down ? He would like to see it down again. He thought, also, that her figure was nice. He named it womanly. Then he remembered that Gallup had told him of a baby that had died. He would have liked at the moment to speak to her about that : to know how much it meant to her. He would have liked very much to be able to help her in some way—to make up—But, how could he ?

“ This is another novel, not a stiff one ; just a fine love story.”

He took the book : “ The Divine Fire.”

Jane’s eyes were on his face as he read the title aloud ; conscious as she was in her being of an unquenchable flame of life ; flickering, it was true, almost blown out at times, struggling against great darkness ; but still alight.

“ Yes,” she affirmed, as though he had questioned the meaning.

“ What does it mean ? ”

Again she looked at him.

“ What are you trying to see ? ” he asked.

“ Your eyes are just the same colour.”

“ You were thinking more than that.”

“ Perhaps I was trying to get at the You.”

“ You had better not do that, Jane. There isn’t much of a You to find.”

She felt that was true of herself as well, nevertheless she asked “ Why ? ”

“ Oh ! I don’t know. No one wants much of you, do they ? They like you to play ping-pong, or tennis, or golf. I hate golf ; they cut up all the beautiful places round London to put their stupid putting greens on ; and then build beastly pavilions, and talk scandal and drink whisky where birds used to sing and nest.”

She laughed ; Anthony’s awkwardness before intimate questions had vanished in a natural outbreak of annoyance at those who spoil his week-end rambles.

He was glad to make her laugh. He glanced round the little drawing-room with its pretty curtains and covers, and hoped for just such a room in his own home: it hadn't too many faddles.

"Did you say this was a love story?"

"Yes: with a happy ending."

"I'm glad of that. I like happy endings. I got quite worried over Diana marrying that official man. Marriage without love must be awful."

She appeared of a sudden very still; out of the stillness she said, "Why is it we are all afraid of love?"

"Are we?"

Something like a chill passed over him; the intimation of an ignorance on his part perhaps as far-reaching—even though different in quality—to hers. He shook himself free of it. Millie loved him, of course, there could be no doubt of that; she was but waiting until he could tell her that he was assured of that rise.

He went off with "The Divine Fire."

What exactly had Jane meant about not being afraid of love? He attempted a consideration of his emotional nature. It had been his habit—a general one—to treat it facetiously. No divine fire had lit his thoughts when thinking of marriage. Sometimes a flame of lust had shot up, and this he had resolutely tried to subdue. But a divine fire——

She stood in that stillness, which he had noticed, for some minutes after he had left. She, too, was thinking of that same fire: under its illumination the world appeared terrible in ignorance; cold, indifferent, unclean. Yet divine words stood: "Many waters cannot quench love, Neither can the floods drown it."

"Even though we drown," she thought; and flung up a window upon the distant shining of stars.

Ernest was not in. His mother's bell rang.

The old woman was fretful; half whimpering as children do, not knowing what ails them. Jane did for her what one does for children; small caressing services, short tales of the day one may make merry over, the re-arrangement of things in the room. The old woman soon lay back asleep.

8.

Anthony saw more of Jane in months which slipped away to another spring. During a greater part of the winter he was angry with Millie. He had discovered her in a flagrant falsehood: he hated falsehood, and had told her so.

Her answer was: "I suppose you are quite perfect. Anyway, you're not coming bullying me. You needn't come and meet me again."

He had taken her at her word. She was in the wrong, and she must write and say she was sorry before he would meet her on the same old terms. In spite of a general humbleness towards the world as a whole, Wilson by inheritance and education was constantly reminded of himself as indisputably the head of the woman—especially if that woman was a prospective wife.

He got through a fair amount of reading, weeded the little garden, and was glad to find that Jane, like he, enjoyed winter walks: did not complain of slushy lanes, liked to breast a keen wind, or to crunch under foot the frozen earth. As in the old days, in the strip of larch wood, she discovered mysteries around them, and brought to his sight of things a significance he had not felt before. Gradually, too, he learnt about the years of her growing up: once a few words about the young man John and his socialism.

"I expect he was in love with you, Jane."

She denied it.

He liked to see her flush.

She told him about the butcher's boy and the birds' eggs.

"He always seemed happy, that boy."

"Why not?"

"Have you been really happy?"

He did not answer this question at once: his rooms, the office, his life, appeared more than usually shabby under it. "No, I suppose I've always been looking forward to being happy some time to come."

An inexplicable colour took her. One of those silences fell between them which seemed charged with a perilous intimacy.

"Those books you've lent me, they make you think—Some of those fellows do really mean what they say; about art, and—and other things."

Her eyes lifted on his maternally. His youthful rawness was a constant reminder of the little boy she had strained to her heart . . .

"What a pity rooms are not big enough to dance in," she said. Their talk was liable to sudden impulses.

"Come on !"

She waved him off. "A room is no good to me ; if I danced I should want to dance round the universe."

Wilson concluded she could not be badly unhappy. Probably the reserve of Trask's temperament suited her. She appeared to his thinking so inaccessible to those easy familiarities he associated with love, and with Millie. Yet he seemed to know Jane more nearly than he knew Millie : as he said to her, "I always feel at home with you."

With an unpremeditated gesture he put out a hand and enclosed hers ; then became self-conscious, and released her somewhat shamefacedly ; her eyes were so different to Millie's.

"You're awfully good to me," he murmured.

"You are my friend," she said, in the deep undertone of her voice . . .

They would seem to regain in some hours the lightheartedness of children ; rousing Trask to join them in absurd impulses : racing each other down a lane where the March wind blew—Trask won the race—going to tea in a cottage, and asking for a double share of jam, and piling up their plates like schoolboys.

"You must behave better, Tony," Jane remonstrated. "I'm sure the woman's husband can see you through the window ; he'll be coming in——"

"If he does you run outside while I punch his head."

Time danced to such irresponsibilities. No one had been young with Jane since he had asked her from the other side of the hedge if she were "all wite."

"Your hair is absurd," she told him. "It looks just like young birds ; they always do their hair like that."

"When did you see them at it ?" He put a hand up and raked his yellow hair ; and they laughed until the woman seated the other side of the wall laughed too, for the memory of youth.

Sometimes they were serious, with the extreme solemnness of youth, and silent because he was stirred to strange impulses and she was aware of difficult intimate questionings. At one

such hour, when they looked up in a growing twilight from sowing seeds in the garden, Anthony spoke strange words which yet bore no awkwardness: "I love your soul, Jane. It is the most beautiful thing I have known."

Her passionately questioning eyes met his, held them a moment, and then fell away; while they drew their breath lightly, under a sky of clearness in which a young moon hung.

He had been watching her turn over the soil; then go with her eager step to answer some question of Trask's, who was working on the flower-bed in front; and again, with what he deemed most sweet patience, answering old Mrs. Trask's bell; and always returning with that gentleness of face. He wanted very much to tell her something of his admiration. Finally, helped by the growing dusk, he had used those words. They were the first of any significance that he had said to another human being.

Trask came down by the fence which divided the villa from the next. Carrying a spade, and in his shirt-sleeves he looked a more genial creature.

"Getting too dark?" he queried.

"Yes, good night," said Wilson.

As he went he heard her ask, "Are you ready for supper, Ernest?"

The words oppressed him. He had a feeling that he had left her with some urgent problem to face, rather than the simple preparation of a meal.

He thought a great deal that evening about platonic friendship: a communion deep as that of David and Jonathan, and transfused by the mystery of sex: a comradeship of more equality than marriage, and not subject to its bondages and satieties. In the future when Millie annoyed him—if he decided to forgive her that falsehood—then he would like to be able to go to Jane for understanding. If he were ever ill, too—seriously ill, he would like to think of Jane being with him.

He did not buy his usual morning paper next day. After all, the papers were little use to a man. There was that wretched business of the suffragettes, and a good deal of scare-mongering about strikes, and the possibility of a war, perhaps in the next generation. He invested, instead, in a new weekly, which appeared to his uncritical mind extraordinarily well-informed. He decided to take it regularly; a resolve he kept,

His discontent with his office and his rooms became more active. Seeds of various rebellions showed signs of germinating. He would so far challenge the conventions as to leave his hat in the office at lunch hours on fine days in London ; and seldom blushed, unless a more than ordinarily good-looking girl stared at his yellow hair.

Laston meeting him eyed him with interest.

" You look fit. Are you practising with a punch-ball, or what ? "

" No ; I haven't got one. I've been trying to do exercises regularly. We lead such a deuced unnatural life."

" Ah ! when did you discover that ? We're as doomed as Egypt, and Carthage, and Rome, me boy. Physical exercises won't save us ; because the social fabric is rotten—backboneless—a sham of life. Here ! I'll order the dinner. We'll over-eat. And face our dissolution with the indifference of repleted organs. Men eat and drink everywhere to forget what they are."

Wilson did not know whether to take this outbreak seriously or not.

They had a large meal with tankards of ale. Wilson certainly felt indifferent about the fate of Carthage after it, and more inclined to write to Millie—a non-committal letter—asking if things were jogging along all right with her. His standard of well-being was still summed up in the phrase he had used through the hedge. Later in the day however, suffering from a reaction, he questioned the familiar term: what if things were all wrong instead of all right ? What if the civilization which had bred him was doomed to pass away ; and a newer race, perhaps that other island power across the seas, should take our place. It was a discomfiting thought. He dismissed it ; but not with the scorn he could have wished, because of the insistence of that recurrent suggestion that things were unpleasantly wrong : things, too, which he had been taught were inevitably and unalterably right. There was that play " Justice " for instance ; he had been to see that. He wished he had not. And these Impressionists, what were they after ? Then strikes—was it possible the workers had to strike to obtain justice ? There was no doubt justice was a more difficult matter than he had been led to believe. Women, too—It didn't seem now so sportsmanlike as it had appeared to him at Cambridge that they should be

deprived of honours they had won . . . Politics were a dirty game—everybody said that—and if politics were dirty, what chance had the country—?

These were confusing and distressing problems.

A fine Whitsuntide brought him solace. It came with that beauty which cajoles us into forgiveness of the English climate. The sun fell with gentle ardency upon the budding flowers, and light winds played about the small hills, valleys and woods. There was no withstanding the hilarity of the hours.

Wilson was early at the Trasks on the Monday morning. He found Ernest sitting at breakfast, while Jane was packing a basket with lunch things.

"Did you hear the cuckoo?"

She nodded.

Trask continued his meal with phlegmatic thoroughness. The lines in his forehead showed marked. It was not in his power to grasp the cup of beauty the May morning held out, neither the cup of life which fortune had put within his reach in the woman who knelt by the side of the basket. He sat preoccupied, with hands unable to lift to bestow blessing, or to stretch out to receive it.

His wife looked from him to Wilson and back again. How could he face such a morning and not respond?

"Dear," she said appealingly. "Have you looked in the garden? It is a morning like heaven."

"Yes, I'm glad it is fine. I really think I ought to stay at home and finish that inventory. If that man I told you of will buy the business I must have everything ready for him."

Jane and Wilson protested. He must come; they would both help him with the inventory in the evening.

"No; nobody could help me."

She sat down by the basket, and stared helplessly across the shining field beyond the garden, then turned to Wilson.

He was so sorry for her disappointment that his heart leapt to his eyes as he returned her look.

She jumped with a sudden movement to her feet.

"Shall I unpack the basket then?" she asked, in a kind of breathlessness. "I promised Mrs. Mears we would take her little girl; she is quite good, and likes walking."

"Oh! of course you and Wilson will go. It will do you both good."

Again they urged him to come. Again their eyes met at his

refusal with a kind of challenge. It seemed a momentous thing, this bank-holiday outing, if Trask kept to his decision.

"You can go to the old woman's at Lower Deening for tea," Trask continued. "Can that child walk as far as you want to go?"

"Oh! yes."

Wilson looked at Trask. He was evidently quite ready to trust Jane with him for the day. Which was very decent of him. Then, of course, Jane was Jane . . . At this point he became disgusted with himself for thinking of this aspect of the question. "We do really think of all women as though they might be wantons if they got the chance," he thought, with a shock of surprise.

"We can't leave you behind," urged Jane. She stood in front of her husband straight and tense; her face pale from daily imprisonment within the house, the fine skin under the eyes shadowed by slight hollows. Her eyes burnt dark with some unappeased fire.

That morning, moving about the house early to get forward the things for their outing, and letting in the irresistible May glory, she had dwelt on the brief life which had lived within hers, and had known nothing of the life of the earth. She had thought of such passing and scarce human spirits as gathering in their hands those veils which divide for us the life that we see from the life we apprehend. She had felt an intimacy between herself and the morning because of this. Was it possible that he, who had shared with her in the mystery of that life so near, yet separate and evasive, should forever stand outside any intimacy of human emotion?

Again she made another effort to reach him. She forgot Wilson; she leaned to Trask with hands out, as though to draw him by force if he were open to no other appeal.

"Come," she said.

He half-reached out a hand to give her a facetious pat. What little capacity he might have had for natural affections had been completely overborne by his up-bringing, and his unequal contest with the things of the world of business.

She turned from him to where Wilson stood, in knicker breeches and open Norfolk jacket; the sunlight concentrated on his fair skin and hair. His eyes were clear and

blue as a child's ; and as her frustrated gaze met them, they deepened sympathetically at her rejected advance.

"All right, if you can't really come," he said to Trask ; feeling actively annoyed with the man. "I'll take care of Jane and the child, and hand them over to the old woman at Deening if they get tired."

On their way to the station Jane said : "If I had stayed at home with him, his mother would have insisted going over the papers of the inventory with him alone ; that is after he has made them out. And Mrs. Mears knows now how they like things."

Wilson's conscience was more buoyant than Jane's ; he felt glad, now, that Trask had decided to remain behind. This was like going back in reality to old days—he, Jane, and the kiddie together. Trask would have brought with him a middle-aged atmosphere, a sense of taking even a day's outing portentously.

"They'll be all right," he said. "Heaven knows you do enough for them day by day." As he spoke he was unpleasantly—urgently reminded of the indubitable fact of a married Jane.

She appeared to him to move as though relieved of bondage ; anxious to set a distance between herself and things left behind. He noted a certain spaciousness about her gestures and make as she breasted ahead, very different to Millie's cramped outline and narrow shoulders. She and the child walked hand in hand.

"It's going to be lovely, Jane. I mapped it out last evening."

He swung the luncheon basket he carried, and expanded his chest before the cool light breeze. The day was really ripping. He paid for their tickets with pleasure ; he wasn't going to take any note of to-day's cost—they were bound to be slight in any case, his long-tutored prudent self whispered.

The three were light-hearted by the time they reached the wayside station, from where they were to start for the wood where they would set out their lunch. The child was the most solemn, doubting the truth of so large a share of happiness in one day. She walked to one side, talking to herself ; almost afraid to steal flowers from the hedgerows,

because of their beauty. Small birds sprang from everywhere, trilled light songs, flitted from bough to bough, from hedge to hedge ; moving to delight and staying nowhere. She heard the lady and gentleman behind her laughing : they must be very happy. She supposed they laughed like that every day ; a thing which children in poor homes don't do. Musing, warmed by the sun, wistful with the sudden confusions of childhood, she strayed along the unfenced path, until she came to a cross road and waited.

" Ah ! Come along, kiddie, take my hand. We turn off here into a wood. If you ask—er, Mrs. Jane, she will tell you about everything that lives in it. She told me when I was a youngster like you."

" Is she your mother ? "

" No."

The lady and gentleman laughed. Their voices were very pleasant.

" Let's all take hands," said the child.

After a little pause they all took hands.

The wood was a narrow copse crowning a ridge of high land. Sunlight and shadow flickered in dreamy rhythm through it.

When Anthony spoke his voice was not quite the same as it had sounded before, a slight hesitancy was upon it. In his right hand lay the warm fingers of the child closely gripping his ; in his left was Jane's cool hand. It occupied his attention. He held it with a grasp which involuntarily tightened ; and then he became conscious of small tremors and pulses in it.

" This is what I call the long wood," he said. " There are never many flowers in it ; a few violets and ground ivy."

The child was tiptoeing, silenced by the soft leaf-mould upon which they stepped, the cessation of bird-song, the shadows.

" Do you remember the larch-strip, Jane ? "

She nodded.

The green fire of the spring in the rising sap moved also in their blood. They became confused as the child had been. Their attitude towards emotional relationships was one of profound ignorance. Even the reiterated drawled command they had often heard, that a man should honour his

father and mother, had been sounded with so little of conviction that it was natural to accept the more emphasised and accepted acknowledgment of parents as dear old muddlers—if there was enough friendliness for it. After all, the world they had helped to fashion *was* a muddle, and honour was a word to shy at. The only relations defined with any accuracy were commercial relations: very accurate, very exact definitions these, with no introduction of confusing, high-placed words.

They emerged from the wood to a rolling field beyond.

"Can you walk three miles more?"

"Of course," said the child.

"To the end of everywhere," said Jane.

"Then I will show you a big bowl of flowers."

The child again pressed on ahead.

"I say, Jane, this is ripping! And so are you—I mean the way you accept me—just as if I were the little boy again. You are not a bit—prudent!"

She arraigned prudence as one of the deadly sins: "What has it to do with friendship? It is for the Stock Exchange and for business." She paused before a generalisation: "To think prudently in human relations must be to make them mean."

He thought about that. In the summary of his virtues he had included prudence with a feeling of satisfaction.

They swung across large fields and down dipping vales, they laughed at very small matters, and looked upon each other and upon all things with great contentment. An inexplicable enchantment enfolded the hour.

Before a spinney of young birch-trees he slowed up and called the child to them. "Go slowly; we are coming upon the fairy's bowl."

Beyond the copse in a slight declivity, around which were giant beeches, just splashed with the silken greenness of unfolding leaves, was a hollow filled with blue-bells.

As the day had advanced to noon both sky and earth became flooded with azure: the shadows in the woods were blue because the leaves were yet so small that the sky came through the branches; and where the blue-bells flowered it was as though the sky's blueness, the shadows and the mists, and the small reflecting waters of the way, had overflowed into a pool that stirred beneath a palpable

cerulean atmosphere. No other flower possesses the secret of this creating light. It rose quivering under the grey branches of the beeches.

The child sighed deeply.

Wilson set the lunch basket down. "We've got to eat," he said; and spread a cloth upon the edge of the shimmering sea.

Presently, being feasted with beauty, and having eaten simple fare, they began to chatter and play together. As the child remarked, it was the gentleman who started it. He put salt on Mrs. Jane's hair. She told him he had no manners, and he replied that she couldn't talk as she had her foot on a bun. This proving true the child shrieked with delight; both with appreciation of conduct admittedly bad, and the natural joy of the young in destruction. They harpooned the bun on a twig for adventurous birds.

"This is Columbus," said Jane to the child; "Columbus of the blue-bell world." She pointed a finger to the far edge of the pool of blue where it ran in eddies into a low brushwood. "Can't you see, right over there, an immense blue-bell? About three feet high, nodding slowly. You must! On the edge—at the foot of that stillest beech."

The child nodded gravely, and said she knew which one Jane meant.

Wilson shook his head. "Ah! that belongs to one of your old stories, of the things which are just too far to see."

"It is there."

He looked at her. Extraordinary impulses moved him. For a moment he seemed to see that blue-bell of hers towering above the lesser ones which sight made visible. He stretched himself out, and his hand fell on the soft stuff of the dress she wore. He grasped and released it, and discovered himself reddening. He jumped up.

"Come!" he said to the child. "While Mrs. Jane rests we will go and pick her a bunch of flowers."

He glanced back as he went. He had no memory of Jane as gay. She had been a solemn little girl who had told enthralling stories, and had at seasons rebuked him. Even her affection for him then, appeared in retrospect, grave and maternal. Yet, in this last hour, and in one or two others he recalled lately, she appeared younger in spirit than the child.

The discovery exhilarated him. The term natural selection unaccountably trailed across his thinking in an attempt to explain the ease of his being, in spite of occasional awkwardnesses, when with her. She renewed the sense of his continuity with the small boy of the larch strip.

Perhaps he had discovered, unwittingly, that love preserves the identity.

She watched them go : he and the child hand in hand. How natural, and harmonious with all things.

She lay back, soaked in the sun high in the ocean of space ; and her heart stirred not only by its own memory, but with the memories of hearts long silent, and with the hopes of hearts yet to beat. The child and the man—their voices came and went.

Very distantly the tide of human bitterness beat up against the healing flood of Spring.

Presently she sat up and clasped her knees. Across the tremendous contented preoccupation of the scene appeared to pass the shadowy figures of her father, Mrs. Ogilvie-Stewart, old Mrs. Trask, her husband ; and lastly herself, drawn after them ; sometimes a protesting rebel, sometimes gently acquiescent because of the pity of it all. Poor, drifting, frustrated lives. How escape ?

She covered her face again. The dewy greenness glanced about her ; upon the azure curtains of air, upon the celestial pool of flowers. Delicate as foam of inland lake a wild cherry netted the humming of bees.

Her soul reached out with intolerable longing for a way of communication with the beauty, the divine intimations . . .

They were returning to her ; the child with a sheaf of blue-bells, the white stalks gleaming against her ; Anthony holding with both hands an immense bunch of primroses.

As they came nearer she rose on an impulse and ran from them down a glade of light. They put down their flowers and started in pursuit. She had not run for years ; her breath came fast, they were gaining on her. She drew up short on the edge of a gravel pit.

Anthony flung out his arms.

" I thought you might trip on the edge," he said, releasing her. He gave a half-bewildered glance which bridged years of time as her eyes received it.

She stood drenched in light, and panting with the exertion of running.

"You almost didn't catch me."

"Ah! but we did," said the child.

"Yes, we caught you," repeated Anthony.

"Then we must stay here for ever," said Jane.

Nevertheless, in a more sober mind they presently sought the cottage of the old woman at Deening, and took tea there. The child was tired, she ate her cake, still with the surprised happiness of so many good things in one day, but without the ecstatic sense of the morning hours. The lady and gentleman played no more tricks on each other.

"We will go back to the station by a short route," said Anthony. "You two have done enough." He was almost aware of piloting himself back to some more secure foothold; as though his attempt at rescuing her had involved him in some imminent overthrow. He spoke in a business voice, reminded himself that he would be back in the bally old office again to-morrow.

The way to the station was by field paths. They walked towards a yellow sunset; Anthony ahead, his hands in his pockets. Of all the jolly walks he had had, certainly this was the jolliest.

"It's been better than champagne," he called back to them. "Hark at that blackbird. There's Mrs. Blackie."

He attempted to copy the note.

Jane watched him, his head thrown back, mouth pursed up whistling, and slight figure outlined in the luminous air.

With the shock of a revelation, illuminating utmost ignorance and blindness, she became aware of him as more dear than anything on earth; dear with a terrible intimate dearness. She stepped forward uncertainly and brushed his arm.

"I say, Jane! You're tired. You've gone awfully pale." He drew her hand through his arm. "Now, you've got to lean on me. Right up to your door, mind. You've told me what you think of Mrs. Grundy, so we'll hang her. Come on, kiddie, you hang on the other side. I'm as fit as fifty fiddles."

He delivered them up to Trask with, "It's been an absolutely ripping day." He looked at Jane. "Ripping," he repeated.

9.

"The loving part which is in us, for want of a lawful hold, rather than it will be idle, doth forge a false and frivolous hold upon itself."

Plutarch.

The next morning he received a letter from Millie. It accused him of having a bad temper, and hinted at a very uncomfortable state of affairs at home ; but no doubt he did not care how unhappy she was.

He read it, looking out of the window on a day which promised showers. Yesterday's brilliancy and freedom were already swallowed up in the past. There would be an extra amount of work to cope with at the office after the holiday ; it might probably make him late ; but he would try and meet Millie as she left the shop about eight o'clock.

He changed his tie after breakfast for the blue one she had given him. He was conscious of a quickening in his sense of what love might mean ; of a desire to be loved, other than he had known before. Yet with it a stronger determination than ever not to commit himself to anything definite—not yet. Once engaged, Millie would probably be exacting in the matter of what he did with his leisure times. And he had no intention of giving up those evenings with Laston at the Mad Arts Club, neither the occasional hours when he dropped in on Gallup. And he wasn't going to give up Jane for anybody. He was very sure of that. He could never persuade Millie to come for a walk. Her excuse had been one of propriety.

"I don't mind walking about town where there are plenty of people ; but it would look funny if I was to go for a country walk with you—seeing that we are only friends."

"All right," he had answered. "I'll make you, one day." Then he had looked at her carefully arranged hair, the big hat on top, the little smart boots with tippety heels. It had struck him that, after all, perhaps she would not go for that country walk. He wished she liked that sort of thing ; but her incompatibilities with his own temperament had little influence upon his thought of her as the

probable sharer of his home one day. His view of marriage was of some indefinitely prolonged sentimental hour. When it ended—well, then they would be middle-aged ; and would jog along like other middle-aged couples. His sense of the relationship—first broached to him in terms of innuendoes and evasions, then school-coarsenesses, and thereafter odd accretions of knowledge—left him, like a peeping Tom, hazardingly glancing through a very straitened window.

The hours of the day passed slowly, in spite of his endeavour to rush through an accumulation of letters. At last he slid off the stool, and looked at the spreading green of the plane leaves lying still against the milky blueness of a twilight sky.

He hurried into the street glad to be free of the office ; and sensible of a quickened life in himself and those who passed by him. He jostled men and women with a consciousness of their importance, of his own importance, of the vast importance of all the whirling machinery of existence.

There was Millie ! He dashed forward with a sudden desire to pluck her from out the indifferent crowd, and tell her some of the fine things of which he had been thinking ; of the books he had been reading. Strange new values were set upon her small figure and pale face.

Her air of injured pride vanished before the ardency with which he drew her hand upon his arm. She judged she had been right in her conjecture that the parting would do him good ; he had evidently missed her.

He thought her looking extra pretty in a comparatively obscure hat, restrained as to trimming. She kept her eyes from him, but he was very conscious of the vivid line of her mouth. He recalled Gallup's words : " Men can't stand the truth from women, and that is perhaps why they seldom get it." That might account for Millie's " white lies." It was the term he used at the moment ; though he was not conscious of ever having heard from her any truth that taxed his comprehension.

He pressed the hand upon his arm. " You've got an awfully nice hat," he said. " I'm going to take you to a jolly little restaurant I discovered some time ago."

Millie was all softness and yielding gentleness. She

listened, apparently interested, to a somewhat tangled description of his recent reading.

"I'm sticking to it in earnest, because I'm an awfully ignorant beggar."

She assured him that she did not wish him to be clever ; she disliked clever people ; anyway, he was much more clever than she was.

The sense of protection deepened in him ; she talked so artlessly ; also a new proprietary sense stirred him, which made him feel pleased when men looked approvingly on her.

The little restaurant was unchanged ; even the same sparkling Frenchwoman was there with her husband.

Wilson removed Millie's coat with tenderness, and told her to order just whatever she liked.

"One day, Willie," she said presently, "let us go to one of the big restaurants. This, of course, is very nice ; only I like to see the people at the other places."

"This is much nicer," he said promptly. "There's such a lot of dressing and fuss, as well as expense, about fashionable restaurants. I hate fashion. This is more homelike."

"Ye-es," assented Millie.

Afterwards they walked to the embankment and stood looking down on the river.

Millie wondered if at last he was going to propose.

What he said was, "I nearly made a beast of myself one night, Millie ; the last time I came to that little restaurant." He stopped. Her face looked very pure against the background of the night. "I shouldn't have asked you to come out with me this evening—I shouldn't have answered your letter if——"

She flashed a glance on him. "I suppose you're all alike."

"Don't believe that."

She fidgeted ; and hoped if they were ever married that Willie wouldn't be stodgy, and not want to go to as many theatres and picture palaces as they could afford.

"I'm sorry I held out so long, Millie. I ought to have written before."

"Never mind. We've all got tempers."

He wondered inconsequently what kind of temper Jane had. He had seen her indignant.

"We're friends again?" he asked.

"Ye-es."

She lifted her face. He gazed into it, and into it read things which he had just begun to discover. With fingers gripping her arm he hurried her across the road to where the shadow of a building made a refuge of darkness. He kissed her hotly upon her little red restless mouth.

10.

"I think we may say that the liberation of human souls and their disengagement from the race-matrix is brought about by love. . . . It breeds souls out of the Race-self, and finally brings them away to an independent life."

Edward Carpenter.

Gallup's stay in England had been prolonged beyond his expectations. He was beginning to think the firm would not require him to go out again. He was not sorry, though he had declared France to be the only habitable country for a thinking man. He was beginning to feel less inclination to leave the comfortable habitudes of the house of the cul-de-sac. Joseph and his wife were disciplined to his tastes; his books looked familiarly at him from the walls; the garden presented sufficient change. And he was getting old. Not that his vigour of mind appeared impaired, but he was aware of a growing affection for the inanimate things of familiar use. In short, he was content to be where he was.

For stimulation, there was his niece Jane. When he summed up the situation for her thus one day she asked, "Stimulating—me?"

"Yes. You may be smouldering now; but how am I to know when you may break out?"

"I am being broken *in*."

"You think you will allow yourself to be unprotestingly conducted to our middle-aged rencontre?"

She looked at him affectionately. "I've come to talk to you about business. If this year's trading is as disastrous as last, Ernest has decided to sell the warehouse, and look out for a post in some similar business. In fact he has

been looking for some time—years. If you hear of anything—don't snort, dear. It can't be helped. He has no natural capacity for business."

"A man shouldn't marry if he hasn't a capacity for making a living."

"I think it is a habit with Ernest's type to marry."

"Then they should marry women with the same habit."

"Don't be savage. And I am a marrying woman." Her eyes, looking out on the sunshine of the lawn, darkened with some indwelling thought.

"What on earth will you do?" he said. "You must come and live here."

She kissed his forehead where the thinning hair still curled above the temples. "I should love to. But what would they do without me? They are both so helpless and so obstinate." She gave a little laugh. "Isn't it funny how difficult we all find it, in our different ways, to grow up? . . . Though you nearly have——"

"Nearly? My dear Jane! And what about you?"

"I'm trying to. I mean I'm trying to get things a bit shaped. Then if big things come—one would be ready."

He shot a glance at her. What kind of big things was she thinking of? He had noticed a kind of bloom of maturity upon her this summer. Some of the grace which Susan had worn so well. In Jane's case it appeared as a quality of mind rather than of body. It shone in a quieter regard in her eyes; her hands were less restless. She seemed to have come to some terms with life, with which for the time she was content. Yet the words "being broken in" suggested some struggle still proceeding. She appeared to him prettier than he had known her, save perhaps in that Devonshire holiday.

She brought her eyes from a distant regard to his face. "If you do go abroad again," she said, "you'll keep your promise about taking me to Paris on the way out? If I try to get to see pictures here—or anything—there is so much to explain—to arrange—as though I had suggested going to the Pole. But if we were in Paris! We could slip away when we wanted—and not explain."

He made an irritable gesture, as though he would have swept the Trask household out of the universe.

"What's the good of an old man to take a young woman to Paris?" he growled.

She flushed unaccountably, and asked absently, "Has Phyllis been to see you lately?"

"They came over a Sunday or two ago," he replied, also absently; he was thinking of that blush. What was happening to his niece Jane? What chance; what contingency? Fortunately there was enough persistency in her quality to prevent one of those strange conversions of identity which make of a familiar friend a stranger. She still had her sudden shynesses, betrayals, awkwardnesses, reserves.

"In their new car, of course?" she said; and realised that they were fencing with words because of something unsaid and obscure between them.

"Yes. Wilson was here. They invited him down for a week-end. I think he said he'd go."

"Oh, yes."

She stooped and kissed him. "Good-bye," she said. "It is good to come here, if only for a few minutes. You always understand——"

He glanced at her ironically. "As much perhaps as human beings can of each other."

"More—much more than most." The emphasis seemed necessary because of that break which had occurred in their speech, that sense of a barrier which each had felt.

"Yet there is nothing to say," Jane thought, as she went out of the gate. "Nothing that I could say." The second way of putting it seemed the truer.

She walked on, a little dazed; happy in the blueness of the summer sky, the rapture in the air, the content of the reaching trees. The beauty focused in a picture dominating other mental visions: a sweep of beeches encircling a pool of blue-bells. At the edge of one of their eddies she saw herself—very distinctly recognised. No girl dreaming before a phantom mirror; but a woman looking with uncovered eyes upon the urgent spring, upon the child whose hand she held; upon the man, upon herself. The clearness had not left that vision; the entanglement was over those things which were without it.

As she walked down the suburban road, well-swept and paved, restricted and exact, her pace quickened, as though

she chafed at the boundaries of the way and was hastening to a destination remote from them.

She let herself in at the door of the villa, and immediately a bell rung. She removed her hat and went into old Mrs. Trask's room.

"You don't hurry yourself," said the old woman.

Jane looked at her gently. "Did you want anything in a hurry?"

"I might have done." Mrs. Trask was sitting by the window with a tea-tray at her elbow, roses in a bowl near, and a look of comfort, even simple luxury, around.

"But I thought of everything you might want before I went out: and I've only been gone an hour"

The old woman's lips pursed out without a reply. She was irritated by the completeness of the service her daughter-in-law rendered. She would have preferred to have had a negligent, forgetting relation, with whom there would have been justifiable grumbles and atonements.

Once Jane had said, "I have my life to live. I give nearly all of it to the house and you."

It was a dark saying to the old woman. What life did her daughter-in-law expect to live other than the life within the house; and with what she termed a woman's duties? Yet she had not ventured to ask for an explanation. Sometimes she hated Jane; with the hate of ignorant age against a youth more informed, and diverging from the usages of life as she had known it. She believed her daughter-in-law to be irreligious, too.

"What did you do out?" she asked ungraciously.

This was a difficult question, because the old woman had said she had no interest in what Mr. Gallup said or did, she had heard some very funny things about him. "I'll tell you some more," her daughter-in-law had replied merrily. For Jane had refused to be beaten by circumstances this summer.

She had managed to so order the work in the house that by keeping time in its daily routine she could snatch a few hours to herself each day. She joined a reading circle—sometimes Ernest came with her—and a woman's suffrage society, and was immersed in avalanches of talk.

She became aware of the end of the nineteenth century as a disintegrating age; of the workers as men and women

laboriously attempting to clear away rubbish, though with little insight as to what they intended to build on the sites they were intent on demolishing. They made no appeal to a supernatural deity, because the anthropological God of their fathers, who was held responsible for human activities appeared to them like a thoughtless mother, who has neglected the adequate supervision of her children, so that their nursery has become a place of recriminations, confusion and discomfort.

She regarded militant suffragettes and rebellious cubists with sympathy if not with understanding, because pessimism and inertia appeared to her the most treasonable offences against life.

Across these revisions and initiations of the mind came Anthony, preserved by some temperamental simplicity from pessimism, and standing by his tradition of letting sleeping dogs lie.

He would come in on Sundays with the soil of lanes and woods on his boots, and wild flowers, instead of wild rabbits, in the capacious pockets of an old shooting coat. He meant to tell Jane about Millie one day, and to ask her to meet them in town, where they could have tea together. He would like them to meet.

On a still afternoon in August Jane sat waiting at the open window, wondering if she should make tea or wait for Anthony, who had said he would be coming in about half-past four. In the small front garden Ernest was syringeing the three rose trees that grew in the one round flower bed. At his feet was a stone jar into which he dipped the syringe, and then sprayed the roses with careful absorption.

Presently Jane called him into tea.

"Fifteen good buds, second bloom, on those trees," he said; taking the cup from hands which seemed tremulous in the passing. "They want care, that's all, and constant attention. You can't expect plants to do their best without. I've spent most of every Sunday just with these few trees; and see the result."

His wife made an acquiescing movement.

Presently he went out again to tend the roses, and Jane put the things back on the tray with slow exactness, as though she feared to drop them. The clock stared at her from the shelf, ticking with deadly precision.

It was six o'clock.

She wrung her hands together. The room became filled with an appalling desolation. There was no succour without it either; nothing but the murmur of obscured struggles and distracted voices.

The repressions of her childhood, the inhibitions of her youth, the restraints of her maturity were struck down by the hour.

She stretched out arms in an anguish of supplication to the closed unmoving door.

It was flung open, and a mass of small branches and flowers fell upon her lap.

"I've brought you all these," said Anthony. "Aren't the berries jolly?"

"I—I thought you were coming to tea."

"I did mean to, but it was so jolly out. I just walked on and on, and had tea at the old woman's cottage."

Her slight breast lifted. "It was better than coming?"

"I've done both," he replied gaily.

She got up, unheeding the burden of green on her lap; it fell to her feet.

"What is it?" he said astonished.

She looked round the walls in desperation. "Perhaps it is that I am tired of always giving," she said, with so wild an energy that the words seemed to rend her. "Will no one ever care to give to me?"

"Jane!" he cried. "What do you mean?"

"That somebody should care to give me—their time, their thought——"

"If I had known you particularly wanted me to come earlier, Jane, of course I should have come," he ended lamely. He did not know what to say; and his diffidence, and lack of imaginative emotion, made it difficult for him to believe that anyone might look for his coming as a thing that mattered greatly.

"I often feel I don't do half enough to repay your kindness."

"Kindness?"

"Oh! I know it isn't the right word," he blundered on. "You are more than kind to me; you always were. You've made a lot of things seem different somehow. I wish you only knew——" He broke off; he wasn't saying what he wanted

to say. He also felt that he had been guilty of unkindness ; and deeper, he was aware of some prescience of sorrow in which he appeared to be involved, and which he seemed powerless to avert.

She rallied herself, stooping to pick up the fallen flowers.

On that day in spring, when she had discovered the secret of her heart, she had resolved to bring her dreams of comradeship—all that they had foreshadowed of succour, endeavour and content—to their friendship, that it might become not altogether unworthy of the ancient friendships of the world.

But his ignorance of his own heart, his determination to escape from emotional issues, rendered the way of friendship difficult and colourless. Difficult, if indeed it was to be worthy of its name ; colourless, unless he should be awakened to some deeper responsiveness.

She said gently, "I understand. I know how difficult——" And left him, taking the flowers to put in water.

He moved to the window, and stood looking upon the empty road. Of course, he ought to have known—Jane always felt things differently from other people. If she was glad, she was so much more glad ; if hurt, so much more hurt.

The villas made narrow wedges of darkness against the summer sky. "It doesn't pay," he thought turning away, "to think or feel too much."

He said so to her when she came in.

Her eyes had regained their enigmatic calm. "You have to remember what payments you mean," she said.

"Oh, yes ! I suppose one means the usual things. Being content, getting on all right——"

"Just that can't satisfy us as payments—always."

"Ah ! Jane, you still believe so much. You wouldn't if you sat on an office stool all day. No adventures from there."

"I don't mean dragons and bandits."

"No, of course not. But what——"

She looked on him compassionately, as at one singularly ungrown ; and then with a wide survey round the imprisoning walls.

"We *are* surrounded by things bigger than adventures we read about. . . . Something big is waiting—just out

of sight. That is why we don't understand ourselves ; we feel strange ; because we haven't discovered what it means : the beauty that is somewhere—the happiness, the love.”

A silence came between them.

He struggled out of it with, “ I don't think I believe in love. Not as we read it in books.”

“ One must,” she said.

He was recalled to an hour when she had told him the onliest way was to believe in fairies. She possessed the power of annihilating time for him. Before that bond, so indissoluble and intimate, his heart beat uncertainly, and he felt a great confusion.

He followed her into the garden to see the roses before it should be dark.

“ I've given them a good doing to-day,” Trask said.

The young man looked at him. He knew now, of a certainty, that the Trask's marriage was a failure. The word appeared inadequate, he substituted tragedy.

It was the first time he had admitted such a word to actual use. Its implications wrought upon him miserably. He muttered a short good night and left.

She watched him disappear with the sense that any parting between them must be superficial, touching only external durations and circumstances. He was there, as the House of the Avenue of Roses was there ; overshadowing all other houses : its rooms the beginning of life, its carriage drive the first step of the long road of Time, its voices the voices which still haunted the hours. Was he not hers as these were ? What though he came and went, was he not always present ?

Trask put away his gardening things and came into the dark house. Jane lit the lamp ; set out the table for supper, and arranged a tray for his mother.

Without, in the shadowy autumn night, stars shone gently and familiarly through a darkness made visible by a tenuous earth light.

11.

When a clerk entered Mr. Wilson's private room on Monday morning he discovered him standing by the office stool absorbed in it. He left a bundle of papers on the desk with

an intimation that the governor wanted them back quickly, and left Mr. Wilson still standing there.

The stool, on a cursory glance, was a preposterous looking seat. Its four square varnished legs, about three feet high, supported a sparsely stuffed seat covered with a slippery material presumably designed to shoot one off into the arms of intruders. The sloping desk and the stool had previously belonged to a firm of architects and was ill-adapted to Wilson's requirements; but he had accepted it with other details of the routine of business, as being all in the day's march: a phrase whose singular inappropriateness to reality had never struck him.

He fixed it now with a penetrating stare, and wondered if a day would come when he would be able to chuck the whole caboodle, and to live in the open air and use his muscles, and shunt the mean and stuffy world of business and figures.

His eyes encountered the bundle of papers on the desk. At the same moment he remembered that Millie did not like the country. He attacked the papers with a sense of grimness, mitigated by the thought of a week-end to be spent with the Needhams, whose new house was in a lovely country; dominated on one side by a golf-links.

Needham's doctor had ordered him to play golf. Triumphant over such superficial stir in the nation as was occasioned by futurists and symbolists, militant suffragists and socialists, were the encroaching links of the country; where excesses of all kinds found perambulating grounds.

Wilson found Needham florid of face and pompous of manner: one of those Englishmen to whom every night men rise from the ardours of eating to proclaim "He's a jolly good fellow." He had been elected to the Local Council and Board of Education as a safe man, with no modern nonsense about him: safe as houses. He himself felt safe as a house. His securities were safely lodged in houses; the activities by which he maintained those securities took place in houses. He distrusted places unconfined by brick; and never took holidays to get away from houses, but to get to larger and even more consolidated ones.

His wife was impressively elaborate in clothes and manner; so was the house in upholstery and service; even to the point of exhaustion; but everyone played up to it as a thing worth while.

Two rooms in the house had evidently been designed with regard to the requirements of a day and night nursery; but were now requisitioned as guest-rooms. Nature sometimes retaliates when we tell her to wait our convenience.

Mrs. Arrobus was staying with her daughter; with her air of appealing resignation and the deprecating glance of her heavy-lidded eyes.

To Wilson the arrangements of the house appeared as so much lost opportunity in surroundings which asked for no more than leisure to explore their interest and beauty. The dream of a very different home stirred his heart: a small house set in the bend of a road, and guarded by hedges of hawthorn; the cheerful clutter of fowls straying along the wayside, and the recurrent note of the clipping of shears or the thud of a spade the satisfying music of its quietude.

This was the persistent dream of his heart; which summed up for him the whole good of life, and the best good for all men. His difficulty, when he came to view it personally, was the woman to make of it a reality.

He said to Millie on his return: "Wouldn't you like a small house in the country, with a garden and roses, and hens?"

"What! buried alive. You don't want to, do you?"

He met her dark eyes, and was conscious of her moist red mouth. "I do, very much, sometimes," he said.

"You haven't told me anything about the Needhams. Was anyone else staying there? I suppose they keep a lot of servants."

"I don't know. Her mother was there—Mrs. Arrobus."

"What's she like?"

"Much more like Mrs. Needham than she is like Jane—Mrs. Needham's sister, you know."

"No, I don't know. Why do you call her Jane?"

"I've known her since we were children."

"You never told me."

"I told you I often went to the Trasks at the week-end. She is Mrs. Trask."

"What's she like?"

"I'm no good at describing people. Sometimes I have thought her beautiful; but perhaps you would not. She is different."

Millie shot him a glance barbed with jealousy. "Oh! I know I'm not clever."

"We've both got a lot to learn."

She coloured angrily. She was not going to acknowledge deficiency by measure of another woman. "I daresay she has plenty of time for reading and being interesting. She doesn't have to serve in a shop all day."

"She works hard all the same. In a basement house; with her husband's mother an invalid in one room. And her husband's business in a bad way, I'm afraid."

Millie regained composure. This Jane wasn't evidently much better off than she was; and wouldn't keep her looks long with a lot of running up and down to do.

"Is she young?"

"A few years older than I am."

Millie was mollified. "The river looks nice with the lights on, doesn't it, Willie?"

They were walking on the Embankment. There had been a drenching shower, under which the lights of the river trembled, and the glistening pavement became a path of reflections.

He gave her arm an abstracted pressure. Under the inexorable swirl of the water flowing strongly to high tide, he was again conscious of a River of Life; upon whose current was borne the insecure reflections of himself and Millie; and more insistently the face of Jane, with deep indwelling eyes.

"You are dull this evening, Willie. Do you think I could get some post next year better than that little shop?"

He looked at her thoughtfully. It certainly would not be fair to Millie to keep her indefinitely tied to him much longer.

"It's the darkest hour before the dawn," he said cautiously. "I don't think I would be in a hurry to change. They are pretty easy with you; you often take a day off; you couldn't do that everywhere."

She stifled her chagrin sufficiently to be prettily sentimental while he took her home.

Nevertheless, words of Gallup's inauspiciously recurred to Wilson: "It is the male who is sentimental; the woman pretends to be to please him." How much did Millie pretend?

"Before this year is out I'm coming to see your people," he said; with a sudden resolve not to propose until he had

seen her in her home. He did not care a fig for what her people were like ; but he wanted to realise her more positively than he felt was possible in the publicity of streets, halls and restaurants. " I shall just come straight in with you one evening without telling you first."

" Don't be silly, Willie," she said sharply. " They wouldn't like it ; they're old-fashioned and——"

" I'll give you one day's warning then."

They had come to the corner of the obscure grey street where they parted. She withdrew her hand from his arm and with a little nod ran from him.

He wished she would not run ; she seemed to have even less idea of doing it than most women. His criticisms of her were singularly untouched by tenderness ; they already possessed the acidity of those which men exercise towards beings over whom they acknowledge possessive rights.

" I wish you wouldn't look suspiciously at me," snapped Millie, at the bent figures of her parents ; seated reading by a gaudy, ill-kept lamp.

" How much longer are you going to walk abroad with that fellow without some understanding ? " growled her father.

" He's getting a rise soon," she said, with a flash of triumph. " Thank goodness, I shall start with better money than we've got here ! "

She whisked out of the room, youthful and aggressive in her fineries ; and left them blinking at each other across the spotted tablecloth. They had sacrificed to the remorseless god of respectability such small chances of enlivenment as their life had afforded ; and they sat there hopeless and frustrated in the fulvous light of the paraffin lamp.

12.

" We do not comprehend because we do not love. For love is the ultimate meaning of everything around us. It is not a mere sentiment ; it is truth—it is the joy that is at the root of all creation."—*Rabindranath Tagore.*

During the winter Gallup again left England. He emphasized to Jane his determination to retire on his return : " I don't know whether my income will allow *châteaux en Espagne* ;

but we'll do things, Jane," He would have liked to suggest that when that annoying invalid Mrs. Trask had paid her final debt to Nature his niece should come and look after his household ; but there was Trask. Gallup had never learnt to make concessions ; it was too late to start now.

He gave her the promised days in Paris ; and entertained himself with her perplexities, and also her discernments, before presentations of life which had never remotely touched her experiences, her sensitive broodings.

Yet she moved with a certain air of intimacy—in the atmosphere so divorced from any she had known—due, he was led to acknowledge, to her capacity for dealing lightly with grave things and gravely with light, so that her understanding was not easily confused before an art regarded as mainly perverse by the more stolid judgments of her country.

She said to him once, in the old groping manner, " Perhaps they are trying to get too much out of life ; while we are afraid of getting anything."

Under the influence of her ardent appreciations and apprehensions, and in a city drenched with the vividness and value of life, he was aware of a conquering Youth forever challenging the world of disillusion.

This same youth in her, sustained against heavy handicaps, secured her from the cynicism of cities, however brilliantly advanced.

" One needs to stay here for a year," he said, as he said good-bye to her at the Gare du Nord.

" One might feel it urgent to steal off to Devon in the middle."

" You incorrigible Englishwoman ! "

He had a vision of her leaving Paris as though challenging even its persuasive individuality with the fugitive flame of her own : " I have seen your dream, I preserve mine."

This parting sense of her deepened his own pessimism. For what end this gallant expression of personality, this persistent resistance against apathy : the individuality, the dream preserved ?

She had been trained in no Art through which she might have expressed her individuality ; and, in marrying Trask had effectually closed down any chance of influence such as she might have exerted in an environment offering wider experience of human contact.

He sat in a café, apparently absorbed in the veridescence of the absinthe he had ordered. His thought was: "Used up—both of us—scrapped material of the Age. He commercially; she domestically—*âme damnée*. . . ."

She—of the damned soul—was borne back to the sombre greatness of London, to the wedge-like villa. She renewed the old tasks; attempting to bring to them something of gay insouciance—the tribute of her holiday. Her faith preserved in the worthwhileness of a constantly renewed insight, because of some future hour—which Destiny would not deny her—of the harvest of her obscured and waiting years.

When Anthony asked her what she had made of Paris she remembered that, in the incredible whirl of the hours with their vast pretensions and presentations, she had been aware of his character—so ingenuous and uninformed—as possessing, in the quality of its simplicity, something more profoundly assured than the versatility and subtlety by which she was surrounded. She had been led to ask whether that simplicity, if acknowledged, and informed of the significant things of living—of childhood, love, comradeship, endeavour—might not yet carry the race, of which it was a constant expression, beyond the perils of civilization, and win a triumph not yet recorded in the annals of man?

She looked maternally upon him; recalling the fantastic lovers and heroes of her youthful mirror of dreams. What chance—what hazard—what tremendous throw of Destiny might conceivably pluck him, and such as he, from out the dim recognitions of their days, and demand of their manhood the overthrow of that which was strangling it?

"I was sometimes glad of you," she said.

"Of me?" he stammered.

Her urgent gaze fell away from his. Was it so strange then to him that she should be glad of him? Was he not—somehow—obscurely—the gladness of life for her?

Again she raised the deep tenderness of her eyes on him; and was aware of the woman's capacity for moulding human material: the difficult, intractable material of existence.

She made answer to his question concerning Paris by a light generalization: "I felt that perhaps one of the characteristic differences between us and them is that we are prudent in human relations and spendthrift in material things, while they are generous in human relations and thrifty with

expenditure. One expected that from what one reads ; and, even on a short visit, felt it to be corroborated."

"Then you must belong to them."

"And you ? "

They were standing in the garden over which chill vapours swept from the field beyond. At her feet was a heap of weeds.

"Why didn't you wait for me ? " he asked, looking at the weeds.

"Wait for you ? " The words appeared to echo down caverns of time and consciousness, as they stood isolated in the ashy glimmer of the haze ; the heap of weeds at their feet, like a simulacrum of the years, some wreckage of their path in time.

"You must let me help you as much as I can," he said earnestly ; yet with a sense of futility, if such service as the destruction of the weeds was all he could offer her.

"Be yourself, Tony. It means so much more than we guess——"

"Of course, Jane, you—you're miles ahead of me."

"Then run, Tony ; run your hardest," she flashed out at him.

"So that we may come in at the death together," he replied, using familiar phraseology.

"Ah, yes."

The brief half-smile crossed her face which was to him its dearest expression. He stooped and lifted the bundle of weeds.

"Go in out of this mist," he said, in his gentlest voice, "I'll burn these."

18.

"The whole conception of a nobler Womanhood for the future has to proceed candidly from the basis of her complete freedom as to the disposal of her sex, and from the healthy conviction that, with whatever individual aberrations, she will on the whole use that freedom rationally and well."—

Edward Carpenter.

He got his rise at the end of the year. But it was some weeks before he settled things with Millie. He had accustomed himself to thinking that only the lack of it stood between

him and his engagement ; now he became aware of difficulties, and causes for further hesitation. He told himself that he had not yet sufficiently considered all the responsibilities entailed : there was his father—what would he think of Millie as a daughter-in-law ? He dismissed this last impediment as mean—but there was still the question of money. Millie was not over-strong, she also seemed inclined to be extravagant. He drew up a detailed list of probable expenditure for a household of three : Millie would of course need a servant. He was ingenuously shy of thoughts which suggested a probable extension of numbers. What a child let a man in for he did not know.

He made a solemn thing of his declaration of love. Millie was relieved when it was over. He was not perturbed by the "shabby hole" as she termed her home—he was accustomed to lodgings—neither by the parents whom she apologetically introduced. He was pleased with her in the setting of home ; a slight nervousness invested her with an air of gentleness, her obvious pride in him he naturally found pleasant.

Yet he was aware on his way home of feeling chastened, rather than exhilarated. As a man of sentiment—under the casual indifference of his speech—he was taken aback at the matter-of-fact aspect of the situation. He wondered, with a pang of regret, whether he had outlived the possibility of any rapture of love.

He was prudent in the choice of a ring ; not allowing any preferences of taste to overrule his estimation of the sum to be spent on it. Very sober was Mr. Wilson, very prudent, over this matter of his engagement.

To Millie's parents he was an unfailing topic of congratulations : that she should have been lucky enough to pick up a young man so steady and considerate.

"Looks such a boy ; he must have good health," said her father ; straightening his sagging figure with a brief regret that his days had not included physical exercises, except those of varying forms of drudgery.

"Hasn't knocked about much," said his wife ; with a constant eye on the moralities of situations. "Millie's got more than she deserves."

The winter months appeared unaccountably a time of presage to the newly-affianced young man ; he went about with the sense of being on the eve of unknown obligations

and demands. The acceptance of his individual responsibility seemed to extend to the whole of his environment. The rebellions he had been vaguely conscious of assaulted him personally; he began to see poverty and ill-health, wealth and indifference, as menacing powers to the life which was common to all. He was oppressed by the names of those dead cities of which Laston had reminded him—Carthage, Rome, Babylon. The last glittering phases of their decay almost became an obsession to his mind.

Because of the disquiet which was an abiding feature of his engagement, the commercial system under which he worked appeared to loom more heavily in his sight each day, as an encompassing net of monotonous labour, sapping any capacity or opportunity for the legitimate joy of life.

"I wonder how it will all end?" questioned Wilson upon the high discomfort of the office stool. "Not much catch to think of one's sons inheriting the same lively workplace. . . . I believe it will have to end," said he, with growing conviction.

When such conclusions became too oppressive he bought Millie some trifle, and went out to meet her with a feeling between relief and perplexity. When she was in the mood to come for a walk with him, where it was pleasant in unfrequented places to feel her hand upon his arm or on occasion his arm round her waist, he was solaced by a temporary freedom from apprehensions and depressions. But her capriciousness perplexed him; sometimes he doubted whether, after all, she loved him.

She accused him more than once of being a luke-warm lover. Once she read a love-scene to him out of a paper-backed story.

"You don't want me to talk that twaddle to you?" he had asked.

She turned her full eyes sullenly on him. A resentful fire shone in them. Again he wondered whether he had lost the capacity for anything deeper than affection. If so there was reason in her resentment. His own heart became chilled.

"Come here," he said, and gathered her on his knees. Her closeness kindled him. They sat silent while he kissed her neck and hair.

He let her from him awkwardly when her mother came in at the door.

"Love's a rummy go," he concluded ; making the dreary distance between her home and his rooms.

He called in to see the Trasks next evening, and found Jane alone ; which offered the opportunity to tell her of his engagement. They talked soberly for an hour about the intricacies of commerce ; both ignorant as to the larger sweeps of the engulfing monster. Ernest was at last winding up his business, and collecting advertisements of vacant situations.

"I ought to be able to do something more than this," said she ; looking over the room whose curtains and chair-covers had become shabby and faded ; and aware of an engulfing monster as strong and as destroying as that of commerce.

"Yes," he agreed. They looked upon each with blank enquiring eyes. He realised that there were qualities unfitted for the market prices of the world.

"It seems there is nothing for me to do but be a woman. There doesn't seem any especial necessity for me being that."

He turned his eyes away, because of the bitterness in her voice ; and because of his constant sense of implication where she was concerned.

The propitious moment did not arrive for his disclosure. Their attempt at conversation became spasmodic and difficult.

"I hate to see you unhappy—or bothered, Jane. I hate it more than anything."

At the poverty of his speech she rose, with one of the quick impulses natural to her, but seldom kindled, and moved to where he sat, and put a light kiss upon his forehead. He made a half-movement towards her, then turned away and went out quickly ; while she asked herself what exactly had happened. . . .

Whichever way her thoughts turned she was conscious of no startling new disclosure, but rather the affirmation of something intimately known and lived through.

Anthony's recoming had restored to her the sense of identity ; of a self more real than the self which had looked on at her marriage, at her surrender, the obscure days of her short motherhood, the monotony of daily tasks.

With the sense of her Self strongly upon her she moved up the narrow staircase to the small back bedroom where she was sleeping alone.

There had been an evening, following a day of awakening

thoughts and vision, when she had said to Trask, "I must have my room to myself, as I did after baby was born."

During that period she had been conscious that he was undisturbed by the arrangement. His lethargic senses made of him a natural celibate; his view of marriage was pre-eminently that of housekeeping, to which was added the security of continuity.

She had not flinched in her determination before the portentousness of his face.

The vision of Love as a Blind Marksman upheld her; loosing his arrows because of necessity, and seeing nothing of their direction because of the confusion, ignorance and lust of men. Her thoughts, sweeping her limited experience, and her groping apprehension of others encountered, poured light upon the figure of the blind god, saw him reinstated in unheeded words: "With my body I thee worship"; and knew in awed and profound deeps that love which did not include worship and freedom, must always mean prostitution; whatever exculpation the conventions and rites of society might extend to it.

Trask was hurt and resentful. If they were married they were married, he argued; and should behave as other married people. He reminded her of his patience during the honeymoon, but now——

"Try and understand," she cried. "How can we claim rights over another's body, which is one with the soul?" She was stricken by the necessity for words.

"But there are rights of marriage; you have them as well as me."

"You cannot think I could ever claim any?" she asked shrinkingly.

"I shouldn't want to take them from you."

"It will mean I shall have to leave you," she said desperately. And wondered what he would do, and the old mother. Her voice was drowned in pity and hopelessness.

"You can't do that; where would you go?" he asked, almost sharply; seeing the house without her, his mother untended; and, his mind losing itself in a gulf of helplessness, figuring himself in the last extremity, unclothed, even unfed.

She attempted further speech: of her own enlightenment, by many repressions, surrenders and mental sufferings. Of her conclusion that, however free she might feel herself to

accept the bondage of work in the house, she was not free to accept the bondage of the body, without the approval of the knowledge of an abiding spiritual union. To do so must be to betray both motherhood and love; and to disavow and deny the Self.

The extreme difficulty of speech was not only in his lack of imagination but in the acceptances of the age: she recognised that as she spoke.

"What will mother think?" he at last asked heavily.

"She need not know. How can it be anyone's concern but yours and mine?"

The assurance lightened his gloom.

As he turned away she felt the slipping of intolerable chains.

She hurried after him and seized his arm. "You are good to me—I can never forget it."

He raised his head and looked in her pale, ardent face.

"Isn't my friendship, and my service, and my companionship worth something to you?" she asked.

His slow eyes kindled at the urgency of her appeal; it occurred to him that they were so much more—what she meant by them—than what he had anticipated from married love.

"Yes," he said, "that is true; they are."

As they parted for the night the bond between them was a more real and nearer thing than it had ever been. A bond of forbearance, freedom and respect.

How thankful she felt now for that difficult step accomplished, as she opened her window and stood looking out on the quiet isolation of a night without stars. Its calm and austerity invaded her being. The surge of emotions fell away; she felt herself gradually emptied of the tide which had whelmed her; as though the cup of her life lay ready and acquiescent for that which was to be measured out to it . . .

Wilson had been caught up on no such flood as Jane; though he was conscious of stemming an unexpected tide; and later, that the climax of his life had been reached in the kiss she had given him. He was elated by it, and proud. His scrupulous dressing the next morning was the acknowledgment of a new personal valuation.

Throughout the day he was conscious of himself as a man of experience and responsibility. He dealt with clerks and correspondence authoritatively; his glance over people in the streets, and at the place where he took his lunch, was keen

and with an eye to their value as men of a complex and profoundly interesting world. He decided he must not fritter away his evenings, but must slog at some reading—reading that counted.

He wrote a line to Mille while he lunched, telling her that he would not be able to see her for some days as there was work he must get through.

During the week news reached him of the death of Mrs. Arrobus. He wondered if he should go at once and see Jane, or whether she would rather he stayed away.

He let a fortnight pass and then went, taking with him two tickets for a concert ; to which perhaps Trask might take her. If he could not go then Jane might come with him ; and he would get a third ticket for Millie. Anyway, the tickets would provide a conversational start : death was an awkward subject—what could one say ?

Arrived at the villa Trask said that Jane was settling old Mrs. Trask for the night. He looked up from a pile of envelopes and cuttings.

“ I was sorry to hear about Mrs. Arrobus,” began Wilson.

Trask lifted his thin face and furrowed brow. “ Yes ; a chill, and double pneumonia. She was ill five days.”

“ That was a blessing.”

Trask peered at him shortsightedly. “ M—m—yes ; ” he murmured, in his stumbling way. He hadn't thought about the shortness of the illness being a blessing ; it had seemed to involve a fearful rush of occurrences. He had sat up himself three nights to get things for the nurse, and for Jane, who was helping her.

“ Mrs. Needham got a bit hysterical,” he said. “ Jane kept up all right.”

“ She would,” said Wilson ; swept by a sudden intimate sense of her.

The door opened and she came in.

“ You ? I didn't hear you come.”

“ The door was unlatched.”

Again they stood revealed to each other in the circle of light from the lamp.

They fell apart before the bowed figure of Trask, shadowed and immovable, with eyes concentrated on advertisements of vacant posts.

They moved silently each to a chair. Life, frustrated,

seemed to withdraw from the small room. The scratching of Trask's pen marked mechanically their awkward speech of death, their suggested arrangements for the concert.

"You take Jane. I can't count on being free until I get something settled," Trask said.

Wilson nodded. "I think I'll be getting back early." He got up to go.

Again they rose and faced each other ; baffled by adjustments of life which bound them inexplicably in silence, and fear, and coldness ; while just beyond reach were verities and simple understandings.

Trask sat pale and round-shouldered over the scratching pen. The advertisements he searched asked for smart men, men with capital, men of experience. He realised that he did not answer to these demands. He was patient and honest, and there was latent strength in his lean muscular figure ; but he found no enquiries for such qualities.

Jane went and knelt by him, and took the pen and laid it aside. He placed an arm around her abstractedly.

14.

"One seems to hear the Aristophanic laughter of the gods as they contemplate man's little clay image of the heavenly Love—which cracked in the fire of daily life, he is fain to bind together with rusty hoops of law, and parchment bonds, lest it should crumble and fall to pieces altogether."—*Edward Carpenter.*

It was Wilson who took Jane to the concert. He hoped that Millie would not hear of it ; he had been unable to get another ticket, which was something of a relief to him, because he had not yet found an opportunity for telling Jane of his engagement.

It seemed impossible to find the right kind of opening for such an avowal at the concert. The matter began to weigh upon him. It interfered with his enjoyment in the music ; and made him constrained with Jane. It assumed extraordinary proportions of difficulty ; threatening indeed the whole structure of marriage, as he knew of it, and causing it to totter before the necessity of his confession. It seemed a confession, rather than the simple statement of a customary step.

He had hitherto thought only of exclusive relations between men and women: those of blood-relationships, and that prohibitive one of marriage, which relegated all other women to the stiff and strained communications known to him. Yet, vaguely, beyond reach of words, he was aware of a bond between himself and Jane which was simple and real as the face of Nature, and fresh with the inculpability of childhood.

He finally attributed his reluctance on the subject to a man's natural reticence in talking of his personal affairs.

Jane went away early in the New Year with old Mrs. Trask. She did not return until May. The old woman had died at the South Coast watering place where they had stayed, and her going had been lingering.

Meanwhile Wilson was buying things for his new home: shining things for a kitchen; china cups and plates; all the odd things which were not difficult to house. He had agreed with Millie to add to this store weekly.

It was the spring of 1914. He supposed that he would really be a settled married man by the next spring. Sometimes he sang at the prospect as he dressed himself; sometimes he was aware of a deep unwillingness to take the final step.

They were muggy days when Jane returned to the villa, where she was invaded by strangers coming to look over it. It was necessary that they should find tenants for the remainder of the lease. Unhasting women loitered in the rooms, making a forecast of their arrangements and necessities; apportioning rooms to individuals, and even discussing suitable colouring and wall-papers. They then disappeared into an unexplained oblivion.

Trask had not yet found work; their only source of income was eighty pounds a year left by Mrs. Trask. Jane wondered what she could possibly do. She would not write to Gallup. In face of the emergency she looked back with dismay upon her education, which had casually distributed crumbs of knowledge to her, with no sense of relation to each other or to any possible need of hers. She had since trained herself to be an efficient servant; that was the extent of her wage-earning capacity. She saw herself one of a stranded multitude of women, thrown up by the tide of middle-class prejudices and ignorances. What could they do but envy both the rich and the workers?

A day of blight came, hot and sunless. The row of villas stood shabby and mean in the stifling air. The dust upon things within seemed endless, the flights of stairs interminable. By the end of the day her feet were swollen, as she stood over the big wasteful grate cooking a meal for Ernest. He did not come in. She ate some herself in the cavernous basement, and then moved upstairs to look for him. It was Anthony who tapped on the door.

He followed her in. He, too, seemed exhausted; the yellow hair lay damp above his eyes.

"Beastly blight."

She drew the curtains. "Let's shut it out. What have you been doing?"

"I don't know, Jane." It seemed an extraordinarily long time since he had seen her. She was getting socks to darn out of a basket; and he stared at her as though seeing her for the first time. She wore a straight untrimmed dress; the dark hair clasped her small head and lifted above her ears, where a blue vein showed down the side of her brow. Her nose was straight, and delicate at the nostrils; her mouth was set in a line of gentle restraint: something in its manner hurt him.

He began to talk about the larch strip; and how she had not been able to throw a ball straight. They talked of such things for an hour.

"I cannot very well remember your mother," she said. "I think I only saw her once or twice."

"I don't think I was good to her," he muttered.

Jane's face and his mother's became inexplicably mingled in his sight. He stumbled again into speech. "I shall never know all she did for me—and always feeling ill. And I cross because she couldn't play longer with me . . . And you, Jane. I believe I was awfully cocky with you because you couldn't throw a ball straight——"

He broke off. It occurred to him that lots of men were cocky about things that, after all, were not so important.

"I always want to get at the truth of things, somehow, with you, Jane. I mean—do you understand—exact truth——"

Silence fell between them. She left off working and looked on him as he sat there trying to make himself clear to her. The little pucker between his brows was as it used to be when

anything bothered him as a child. He looked to her dejected, uncared for.

Behind the deep surface of her eyes something began to stir like a light gaining strength and transparency. She rose and stood before him. Her eyes held his with such intensity that he felt as though nothing could ever again be hidden from her concerning him.

She said : " Whenever things are difficult—somehow, we're blind, and can't find our way. It is true, Anthony, that I love you. Perhaps you know." The culminating passion of the words was such that her whole being seemed gathered in an immense concentration upon her avowal.

He rose, and stood looking on her ; then kissed her with a kind of deliberate fearfulness.

Then he remembered what he had come to tell her. The words seemed wrung from him, as though against his will. " I am to be married, Jane. I meant to have told you. I am to be married—before the end of the year . . . Forgive me."

He did not look on her again, but went blindly out of the house into the falling night of the streets.

He walked on and on.

Along interminable pavements where small shop windows threw yellow patches of light on the hot dusty pathways. Past numberless street lamps, which he once started to count and then forgot what number he had reached. Past faces of men and women ; hurrying, anxious, oppressed. What he himself appeared to be hurrying from was the urge of thoughts not to be faced. There was nothing with which he could confront them—nothing that he could do. If he could walk far enough their urgency would diminish—he would be tired—he would sleep. To-morrow they might appear less formidable.

He reached wider thoroughfares ; was coming into London itself. A main had burst in one street ; the gutter was a thick stream carrying with it the refuse of the road. He watched it. Near him an organ boy let go of the handle he was turning and whipped the stagnant current with a stick. It flicked over his filthy clothes, and sprayed with dark clots the grimy organ cloth.

He hurried on again ; accompanied by a sense of defilement. And again—what chance of escape ?

Once more he was come upon narrow streets, more crowded than the ones he had left behind. Two boys were fighting in a ring of lowering faces. "Put more guts inter it," one yelled out.

He tried to out-distance the words, but they stuck to him, focussing the blurred impressions of squalid pavements, furtive faces, oppressions of disease and dreariness. Neither could he escape them when, his body becoming weary, he ceased to be conscious of the urgency of flight, and, rambling on, began to recall the progressive scenes of his life. The class-rooms and dormitories of school; quads and chapels of college; corridors and places of business; down to the intimacies of the rooms where he lodged; his relationship with Millie; his expectations of the future.

"Put more guts inter it." Himself and the civilisation he knew appeared arraigned by the boy of the gutter.

He did not succeed in throwing him off until he reached an open space where a wind began to stir. Shadows seemed to cross it with noiseless feet. Before their evasive presences he became more conscious of himself; of the tread of his feet; the feel of his clothes . . . He recalled a night when as a child he had stared at the dropped curtain of a stage until it had of a sudden rolled back and transferred him to a world of immense activities and illuminations. He was aware now of a curtain rolled back, and tremendous activities beyond. What they were he could not see. But he knew, with profound certainty, that he was soon to learn.

He stopped, and considered what place it was he had come to; and recognised it as a common near Millie's home. There was a station not far off; he must get to it.

He asked himself with bewilderment whether he had been running away from Jane.

In the extreme fatigue of his body and mind some other power seemed to have taken command, and to have brought light and assurance where had been darkness and confusion. Jane was in that light; all would be well.

Someone caught his arm. "You—Willie! What are you doing out here? You never saw me. Isn't it a rotten evening? Given me the blues."

He looked at her with disbelief. It certainly was Millie. He said to her: "When is our marriage?"

She turned her head aside with its inflated outline of pads and rolls. "Three months to-day," she simpered.

He saw her with an acute and photographic exactness. "Ah, yes!" he murmured.

"You're a nice one to forget that! Come on home with me; it isn't really late. Dad has been making something for us. It isn't half bad."

"Not to-night."

"Why not?"

He could think of no excuse. She hung on his arm. He was aware of a half-thought which suggested he should fling her off and run.

"You want livening up as well as me. Come on."

He went.

Millie's father was finishing the thing she had spoken of: a medicine chest of painted deal, disfigured with knobs.

"You'll find that very handy, my lad. Come to a time when there's more than two of you!"

The moment of illumination and assurance was obscured. He heard Millie giggle. He was whelmed with a kind of shame and sense of desecration.

"I must go," he said.

In the narrow passage she pressed near to him with uplifted face.

"We will be friends for to-night," he murmured.

"You don't want to kiss me?"

"I——"

"Oh! All right! I don't care."

The door banged behind him.

"He liked the chest, didn't he?" Millie's father asked.

"I suppose so. He does have stupid moods sometimes."

"They all do," said her mother drably.



PART VI
UNDEFEATED

"Memory, as we have tried to prove, is not a faculty of putting away recollections in a drawer, or of inscribing them in a register. . . . The piling up of the past upon the past goes on without relaxation. . . . In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant."

Henri Bergson.

1.

THE billet was in a convex terrace of houses of which it was the centre ; pressing forward on the sight " like the middle button of Mr. Pickwick's waistcoat " : so A. C. Wilson, Lieutenant, facetiously described it ; in a letter to those left behind in a life so remote from his present one that he sometimes found it difficult to believe that he had once belonged to or would ever return to it. Everything that had appeared irrevocably bound up with his experience was become as distant as birth and death ; while everything in the life into which he had been projected lunged at him with an insistence which left him with a constant sense of arming himself against a show of amazement or despair ; or any emotion which, having fought shy of in the old life, it had now become imperative to ignore.

The country was at war. He, Anthony Carmichael Wilson, was a soldier. To such an incredible adventure had that office stool acted as the diving board ; from which, having taken the plunge, he was exercised in suppressing the gasp.

The empty house which had been commandeered for the billet faced a wide road down which trams passed jangling. An air of decay was upon the house : the steps that led up to the door were discoloured and chipped ; the door had lost one of its glass panels and was boarded over.

Down the steps Anthony passed many times during the day ; always with that sense of repression heavy upon him : a repression of which he was acutely aware because marked by new and official symbols. He was expensively clothed in khaki cloth and leather trappings, the band of his army cap pressing relentlessly round his head.

What he should do with the rest of the morning was his most frequent deliberation about eleven-thirty ; especially when a cold drizzle fell upon the grey northern town.

He was called at eight in the morning, when an orderly collected his tunic, belt, boots, and leggings to clean. If he could have cleaned them himself there might have appeared some reason for leaving his bed on a wet morning, when

there was no inspection work to do. After breakfast he hung round trying to find work ; but sometimes the Army Council had issued no new orders, and there were only a few passes to sign. In life outside the billet the necessity for work—urgent and unremitting—increased with every day : the pressure of it was visible on the faces of civilians, in articles in the papers on speeding-up ; ships, munitions, recruiting. But no one hurried in the billet. Everywhere else Time was advancing with disastrous speed ; here it was difficult to persuade it to get a move-on.

At noon Wilson, being fed-up with the dilemma, lounged to the local Conservative Club, which offered a welcome to officers of His Majesty's Army ; and interpreted the phrase in terms of papers, drink, and billiards. Here he obtained more of all three than he desired. After lunch he walked on to the rain-swept headland confronting stormy seas ; and returned to the billet about four for tea. Still nothing doing. He changed into slacks and lounged off to kill the rest of the day.

Yet he was aware that never had life appeared so desirable to him as now when he found so little use for the hours. Had the measures of death and sacrifice, set up with such terrible irremediacy, already set their valuation on things which he had hitherto accepted with indifference ?

Time was not likely to eradicate the impression being formed in his mind of the governing type of Englishman, as illustrated in the commanding officers of his company : creatures with an astounding capacity for idling away time ; with crude schoolboy codes of honour ; simple careless affections unrelated to any ideals of love ; and a capacity for not being hustled which withstood the shrieking head-lines of daily newspapers read with unabated devotion.

Sometimes Wilson wrote to Millie, in the room set aside for the use of subalterns. He would begin " Darling Millie, Having got the place to myself I send you a line——"

He stared out of the window on to a yard littered with baulks of timber, several dust-bins, and a tumbledown coal shed. There seemed nothing to tell her. The room was bare, save for four chairs and four trestle tables, upon each of which was a rough wooden box holding papers. On the walls was an evil blotched red paper. He was glad to remember that Millie was in congenial surroundings, and getting satisfactory

money doing hair-dressing in a fashionable Stores. It wasn't the work that he would have chosen for her, but it was light and she was happy : and, of course, it should not matter to anyone what kind of work people engaged in, so long as it was honest and the conditions suitable : so he argued, under the pressure of the army cap, reminding him of numberless taboos and restrictions involved in the wearing of it to the satisfaction of the Army Council.

The question of his marriage had been in abeyance since war was declared.

He was aware, when he played bridge with the colonel of an evening, that he should feel some awkwardness if it were necessary to tell him that he was engaged to a girl who dressed hair. "And that, of course, is ridiculous" remonstrated Wilson ; kicking vainly, as stronger men were doing, against such interdictions.

They played bridge for fivepence a hundred. The talk was of theatres, women and restaurants ; with a side glance at the evening papers : " Anything fresh ? "

He was confused when he recollected the kind of talk that he had listened to during his year of soldiering, and in the four billets where he had been stationed. He considered shame to be an unmanly quality, therefore tried to repress that extremest overwhelming of his spirit before men who talked of little else but their lusts, and how they should satisfy them. There had been such men in each of the billets. Nothing silenced them : not even faces of boys flushed with the faith of youth, and coming straight from simple homes and the eyes of mothers. He had seen the straight gaze of many such obscured. He felt it to be damnable.

But what could one do ? He was conscious of a sense of betrayal in himself ; as though being a decent fellow wasn't really enough. Even with that modest ambition, it was necessary to " Put more guts inter it." The street-urchin's taunt extended disquietingly over the reach of his thinking ; to the extremest limit of the question : " Had England forgotten to put guts into her life ? " An importunate vilifying questioner that urchin ; impossible to escape from his provoking braggardism.

He abstained from laughing at obscenities. Yet the saturated atmosphere of sex around was such that he sometimes found it difficult to confront the faces of decent women.

There were four beds in the room in which he slept. A faded paper with garlands of roses was on the wall. A length of chintz had been bought to match it, and was hung over the frame on which coats were hung. The touch of femininity was emphasised by photos and pictures on the walls : Kirchner prints of girls in varying stages of nudity, surrounding brackets by the beds which carried photos of wives, sisters and sweet-hearts ; gathered together without regard to honourable congruity.

The bracket by Wilson's bed contained nothing but a small weather glass, one of Hardy's novels, and a paper-backed French novel, which he had bought to rub up his French against that impenetrable hour of his "going out." As for other interest it might contain besides an educational one, "It can't be worse than a lot of these fellows," he decided ; and was surprised into considering if it might be true that Frenchmen were no more immoral than Englishmen. He decided that the book would shield him from any reproach of being a superior person : the last thing he wished to appear. At the same time he did not mean to unpack from his box the three photos—of his mother, Millie and Jane—by which he had intended to make the room homely.

"I'm not going to put them among those beauties," was his emphatic decision.

Under the brim of the unrelenting hat was hidden his staggering surprise at phases of life of which he had hitherto remained but vaguely aware. At school, college and business a physical fastidiousness had withdrawn him from too close a contact with the animal characteristics of his kind.

He was now in circumstances which offered no chances of withdrawal. They foreshadowed, and perhaps he was half conscious of it—more than reports in papers and the wear of khaki—other circumstances to which he was being impelled ; where, also, there would be no withdrawals.

"I don't know when I shall go out," he wrote to Jane ; and sat with pen suspended in a hundredth attempt to realise that there was a war : that men went out to it, took part in it, were mutilated and died. He felt it to be impossible that he should happen to be one of those for whom death waited. He had done so little, knew so little—was not even married ; had scarcely known what love was. "Not really,"

he soliloquised ; and recalled the evening in May when Jane had told him she loved him.

It was conformable with his temperament, fearful of emotional issues, that he had striven to convince himself that she had but spoken of sisterly affection ; - natural after the renewal of their friendship from days of childhood.

Clear upon that conclusion he would be aware of her eyes ; and that candour of her face by which he had found himself measuring human relations, and before which he had sometimes arraigned himself.

Like the imminent hour of war for him, the hour of love stood in his consciousness unsubstantiated, almost fantastic. For the hundredth time he turned from the memory conjured up by the perception that he had never known love, and wondered why it was that Millie now seemed in no hurry to be married. She had said that she didn't believe in a war marriage, in one of her latest brief letters. He had made a will in her favour ; she would get the five hundred pounds of his life insurance if anything befell him.

Trask was working in an insurance office in a Surrey town. They had let the ugly basement villa at last, and had sold some of the furniture. At all events their income, if small, appeared secure, Wilson thought with thankfulness ; and Jane was doing orderly work in a local hospital. She had written : " You don't know what it means to me to be doing urgent responsible work."

He tried to explain when he wrote to her his sense of the immense insecurity of events ; of his blundering attempts at sifting and assessing impressions while his body moved assured in the exact military clothes.

" It is all a fearful muddle," he wrote ; by which he meant the amassed tangle of waste and incompetency, the sinister betrayals of motives, the intrigues which had come under his notice, and which must represent so small a fraction of the total infidelity.

A man had told him that we lost one of our first campaigns in the East through whisky drinking. He had never considered alcohol other than as a subject for amusement, and attempted to dismiss the charge as exaggerated ; but there were men in the billet who lent credence to the story : Those three Scotch officers, for instance, who on a five days' leave from France had drunk whisky systematically from eleven

in the morning, when they left their beds, until they reeled from the club at midnight, hailing the lights of lamp-posts as taxis. Amusing? Perhaps. Perhaps tragic; leaving Wilson more uncertain of his standards than ever.

There was acrimonious talk about aviation; its activities rendered inoperative by rivalry between Admiralty and War Office: there were the pro-cavalry and the pro-tank camps. Each man shouting in his own interests, until there were hours when Wilson contemplated England as staggering and lost, not because of the enemy, but because of those within her own borders.

What had Laston said about Babylon, Carthage, Rome? He regretted that he had not taken more interest at school in the stories of their passing.

There was that Japanese statesman, too, who had said that the war was the death of European civilization. That involved something incomprehensibly bigger than the overthrow of the small conventions and respectabilities he had begun to take some pride in defying. It conjured up the destruction of all that he had recognised as the fabric of life.

He pulled the implacable peak of the cap lower over the baffled sight of his eyes, set his mouth close, and sought the Headland, standing indomitable against lashing seas and storms.

Here it was that he could recapture the look in the eyes of Jane Trask; from the direct questioning glance of her childhood to the no less direct, but enigmatic appeal, of the recovered days of their intimacy. The sense of his childhood and hers appeared the only verifiable phase of his existence: funny that, he reflected, when one would have imagined that existence should become more verifiable with the enlarging of experience. His mind, working rustily, suggested that experiences might be of small value unless sought with discernment and purpose.

Anyway, he concluded, the destiny of the nation was not in his hands, other than was connoted by "carrying-on." That he was prepared to do; and, he added, faithfully; and turned a side-glance again on himself as unbelievably a soldier in an awful combat.

He stared at the Headland, swept by a bitter wind.

Someone touched his arm; Captain Rowden; the only

man he knew here who liked a breath away from the town. He carried an evening paper.

"Looks as if we've had another nasty set-back."

The two men held open the sheet between them.

"Heavy casualties."

"Yes. We seem to be paying a pretty thick price ; but when Russia recovers again——"

"Yes ; nineteen seventeen ought to see the end of it."

"Oh ! it will. Money and food will settle the question before then."

The two men walked back to the billet together ; sharply, and with set expressionless faces.

2.

A raid in London at the end of his first year as a soldier sent him hurrying up to see Millie. It was the longest time he had been parted from her : six months. He had telegraphed her to meet him at the station ; and as the train ran in to the long platform he leaned out to get a first sight of her, his eyes kindling emotionally. He had been led to think so much more—and differently—of women than he had thought before. Strange, that, he ruminated, that getting ready for war should involve the other. He still intrinsically regarded the war as a chivalrous adventure in aid of Belgium, and for the defence of the homes of England. He was conscious in himself of no lust of power, acquisition, and cruelty : ready material for kindling other lusts.

He jumped out of the train, looking extraordinarily fit ; his figure held straightly and outlined by the fitting tunic ; his eyes quickened of expression, his fair skin reddened. He moved down the platform with a certain pleasing swagger ; as though assured of manhood at last, in a way impossible from that far-off office stool.

He waited about for half an hour but Millie didn't come. He took a taxi to her home. Her parents opened the door. Millie had found it impossible to get off, they explained. She would be in shortly. They bustled about him, and about an ample supper laid out in the shabby parlour.

Presently a key turned in the front door. He rushed out

and flung his arms round her, and held her to him with ardour ; whispering in her ear.

"Don't swallow me, Willie."

"Let's look at you," he said, and held her from him.

She wore one of the light fur coats with fur buttons which subalterns all over the country were buying for girls. It came to half-way between her knees and ankles ; the short skirt was but an inch longer, and displayed open-work stockings and high boots reaching up to her calves. On her head was a small brimless hat perched over one eye.

His ardour received a cooling. During his absence he had assumed a modest maternal Millie, moving quietly among his future home things, wearing soft obscure clothes.

"Did you manage to buy that fur coat out of the money I sent you ?" he blurted out.

She turned away with, "I get good money myself now." With the swing of her coat he saw the swell of her calves. Talk of men came to him ; he flushed angrily.

"You might wear your dress longer," he said shortly ; and went back into the parlour embarrassed, almost antagonistic. Of course, Millie couldn't know the kind of things men said ; but he knew—And why should she make herself cheap with such dressing ? Poverty was all right, he argued, but not cheapness. He was reminded of the Kirchner prints ; and sat frowning while her parents eyed him uneasily.

They sat down to the table when Millie joined them. It was provided with home-made cakes and dishes prepared by the worn mother, who begged him to take his fill, since she had made them for him.

He regarded her affectionately ; her anxious face appeared to him very pleasant, and he satisfied her by eating more than he wanted, while Millie picked over her food, as was her custom when he was present. Something in her artificial manner and talk, her easy acceptance that she had come to a lucky time, when she was able to spend money freely on clothes and outings, brought home to him, in a vivid rush of opposing contrasts, the fact of war.

He decided he must speak seriously to Millie when they were alone.

"How long leave have you got ?" she asked. "Until Sunday night ? We could do a late turn at one of the halls

this evening ; and a theatre to-morrow. There won't be anything to do Sunday."

"If you like." He had anticipated spending the evening alone with her, talking over their future, and consoling her for his absence by building up plans for the future. But Millie appeared in no need of consolation ; neither of the obtrusion of any future upon such a satisfactory present.

He stared dejectedly at the toes of his boots when she went to get ready.

"I don't think these high wages are any good to gals," said her father. "And I don't think much of her friend Snubby ; and that Air chap who goes out with 'em. I should put your foot down a bit, my boy."

It was what Wilson was contemplating ; but was so divorced from his anticipations as to leave him feeling dished.

"I wish she hadn't spent all the money I sent her on that coat. Beastly things, I call them," he muttered.

Her parents exchanged glances.

"Like other girls I expect she'll settle down all right wen she's once married," her mother said evasively.

Wilson looked up sharply. He saw that they were more worried about the coat than he was. Why ?

"How much did it cost ?" he asked.

"I don't rightly know," replied her father hesitatingly. "You ask her."

"Are you ready, Willie ?"

He went out with her, walking stiffly, with his eyes in front. Presently he said, "It doesn't seem to me decent, Millie, to be thinking so much about clothes and enjoyment when men are dying for us out there. I wish you had joined the V.A.D.'s"

"I daresay," she flared resentfully. "And get no money and no thanks for what I do. It's all very fine for girls whose parents have money. They, perhaps, like a bit of work for a change. It's the first time in my life that I've been able to enjoy myself without asking anybody's leave."

He was mollified by the answer, which appealed to his sense of fair-play : she certainly had had a monotonous time in the shop, and looked better in health now ; her cheeks bore a pretty colour, she had the appearance of being well-fed.

"I don't grudge you anything that makes you happy,"

he said. "All the same"—He did not finish the sentence. He wasn't quite sure what he wanted to say; and was a poor hand at any time at explaining himself.

She slipped her hand through his arm. "It isn't against regulations, is it? Not if I take your arm. . . . You do look awfully well, Willie. I shan't like you in any other clothes once I've seen you in these."

He relented; and decided that he would not ask her any questions about the coat until Sunday; when they must have a long afternoon's talk together before his return. She hung to his arm clingingly, her eyes demurely lowered.

It was a good performance at the music-hall where they went. They sat in expensive seats. She took off her coat, and he saw the white roundness of her arm in a transparent sleeve.

"I shan't wait to get married if this blooming old war goes on too long," he said.

She did not give her familiar little giggle; she looked at him consideringly; slowly fingering the fur of the coat which she had thrown round her on the seat.

"Darling," he whispered; pleased with her pensive air.

She went off to the Stores where she was working next morning, and would not allow him to accompany her near it.

"We're engaged," he said.

"Yes; but I don't want everybody to know my business."

"You wear my ring."

"Of course. But lots of girls wear rings. Good-bye. I shall be home about two."

He walked away disgruntled; not knowing what to do with himself for the rest of the morning. Had she not again set back the tender flow of his feelings, he would have been content to walk in Kensington Gardens, which were near, to dream about their love. As he lingered, disconsolate, upon an empty pavement, he remembered that Laston was stationed somewhere in London; and was lieutenant in an Artillery company. He decided to ring him up.

They arranged to meet in Fleet Street for lunch.

He was sensible of a twinge of malicious satisfaction in that he would keep Millie waiting for him after lunch as she had kept him on his arrival.

The sight of Laston's lean face surveying the occupants

of the room with its assured and contemptuous glance produced a lively exhilaration in him. A few soldiers were at the tables, but mostly there were sleek business men talking money.

"They don't look much like war," Wilson remarked.

"They may do before it's over. . . . I go out any day now."

Wilson regarded him with an accession of affection. He had always felt admiration for him; but he was seized now with an extraordinary solicitude; a momentous sense of the implications of separation and parting.

"I say, do you?" he muttered. "Let me hear from you. I seem stuck where I am. Nothing doing; and ten men dawdling through the work of three."

"Yes; no one will ever reckon the price we shall pay for governmental and military contempt of brains. Youth pays as usual, while the smug Abrahams of our race comment complacently on the sacrifice their sons are making. All men over sixty should be relegated to country cottages; and given two pounds a week to live on. Might except a few who have rendered some real service to humanity."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea," chuckled Wilson. He never made plans himself for settling the fate of large sections of his fellow-men; but he liked to hear Laston at the job.

They ate a large meal with a better appetite to it than in office days. Several times during it their eyes met with unembarrassed affection.

"I wish I were married," Laston said, in his incisive way. "You're not either. I once was, nearly: but she cured me of making another attempt. Trouble is we can't be frank and friendly enough with the kind of girl we want to marry. Old men regulations and conventions."

"I'm engaged," Wilson volunteered.

Laston looked at him. Anthony did not enlarge the statement. "Are you? Good luck."

The contemptuous twinkling eyes again ranged the room; whose occupants were talking volubly and confidentially, flushed with incontinent meals.

"Has it ever struck you that though the Germans may be more vicious than we are, we may be more corrupt?"

"Corrupt?"

"Um—yes, corrupt. The German nation is fighting for

an idea—the domination of the Fatherland. Have you been able to disentangle any one idea which is animating with power any overwhelming majority of us ? ”

Wilson stared in front of him with his puzzled clear gaze.

Laston's eyes bent on him, became infused with unwonted gentleness. He said enigmatically, “ Are there enough of you to prevail ? ” He was balancing the few honest men of his acquaintance, who unfortunately appeared deficient in guts, against the schemers and betrayers—the corrupt men of mind and body, whose complacent faces led him a hundred times a day to desire a civil warfare, where such men should be mown down remorselessly by an implacable army of Youth.

At the restaurant door they parted ; with a prolonged hand clasp, in which life seemed a very urgent thing, and death a near reality. Death was near, of course, in the old days ; but one hadn't recognised it.

“ Cheerio.”

“ Cheerio.”

It was their parting this side of eternity.

Anthony was unable to shake off a sensation of melancholy for the rest of the day. It seemed as though Millie was aware of it ; she was quiet ; and, as he judged, considerate.

In the end he left without saying much about the fur coat ; a mildly admonishing “ Now, don't spend *all* your money on clothes.”

“ No, of course not, Willie,” she replied eagerly, and as though with relief.

He was conscious of a sense of detachment in his farewell embrace. Though he thought of her as his future wife there seemed to be less reality in their relationship than in that which had sent a pang through his parting with Laston.

With confusion in his heart he said tenderly, “ Good-bye, dear darling. I daresay I shall manage to get a week-end off before many months.”

“ Good-bye, Willie,” she replied breathlessly. “ Mind you don't lose your train.”

She went to her room when he was gone, and sat staring at a photo of him which was on the dressing-table. Then, with sudden energy, she drew the brimless hat out of its box, re-sewed on it an emerald cockade which she had removed before his coming, put the hat on, arranged her hair lower

over her ears, pulled on the high boots, pinned an artificial rose into the front of the fur coat, and drawing on a pair of light gloves tripped downstairs.

She called down the passage, "I'm going out. I shan't be late."

3.

Three months later she asked him to release her.

"Perhaps we have never been very well suited," she wrote.

He also received a letter from her father. "I am sure I am very sorry, my boy. I tried to give you a hint about that *Air Service Chap*. I suppose she told you he gave her the fur coat. He is very flush of cash *at the moment*. Her mother and me are very upset at her treatment of you."

When Wilson replied he asked Millie to keep the engagement ring he had given her if she liked it; also any other things.

She wrote saying that it was awfully nice of him, and she would always think of him with esteem.

He smiled wryly at the word. He was conscious of feeling more stranded than ever; of a further necessity for repression. He hated the idea of a broken engagement. He had tried to follow after faithfulness; it was the virtue which had most appealed to him. The confusion of his soul became more involved. He felt himself profoundly ignorant. Millie had deceived him; and he had counted on her fidelity as he had counted on his own: his specific masculine vanity—he had little other—was hurt.

To the conclusion that he knew nothing about love—as a convincing reality—was now added another conviction, that he knew nothing of men and women: he only knew about the things they do; nothing about life; the motives that move human beings.

What would Jane say to this broken engagement?

It came to him with a sense of tremendous relief that Jane would know what he felt about faithfulness; that, indeed, she would somehow understand what he did not understand himself. There would be little necessity for explanation.

Before the Trasks had left the villa he had taken Millie

to see Jane. He had been anxious about that meeting; had prayed to heaven that she would see the best in Millie.

While he made conversation with Trask he was listening to the women's voices. Millie's simpering and ingratiating; Jane's with that tenderness which surcharged her voice when she was seeking to understand—desiring to love—It was not to be described; but he knew—he knew.

Millie had made her farewells prettily, under a realisation of her good luck in capturing Willie. Measured by him Mr. Trask appeared a heavy sort of person.

“And I don't know how you could ever call her beautiful, Willie,” she remarked as they left.

He did not answer. Something tightened across his heart. Was it a recognition that the intangible aspect of glamour, which we call youth, had passed from Jane?

An obscure feeling of remorse shadowed his eyes as he walked by his chattering complacent betrothed. . . .

The northern town was bleak in the wet spring and early summer. Wilson's face was bleak, too. Men wondered at his solitary ways of living. He was no pedant or prig. They judged he must be secretly married, or have just emerged from some unfortunate and, by their choice of reasoning, questionable love affair.

He did not write and tell Jane of the broken engagement. He would wait until he could get leave to go and see the Trasks. He was glad to know that Gallup was in England. He thought of him as understanding Jane better than anyone else could.

He would be getting leave soon, probably embarkation leave. Great things were to be done on the Somme that summer. Men said victory would be theirs before it was over.

“If I go out and don't come back,” he thought, “I shan't be spoiling anyone's life now.” His face hardened; he looked out upon his fellow men with a disillusioned gaze. Amid the bewilderment of his mind and feelings his soul was finding itself.

He left the will made out in Millie's favour.

4.

"Love is a complex of human relations—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. . . . The physical is desirable for many very obvious reasons. . . . The mental is desirable, to give form and outline to the relation; the emotional, to provide the something to be expressed; and the spiritual to give permanence. . . . The *positive* value of love has hardly entered people's minds. To teach young things to love, and how to love, has seemed something wicked and unspeakable."—*Edward Carpenter*.

In that spring of 1914 whose only presage of doom, to some people, appeared the activities of suffragettes, Jane had contracted pneumonia. It was not discovered until they had arrived at the rooms they had taken in the house of a blank-faced woman, with a parrot's voice, in the town where Trask had obtained work in an Insurance Office.

The disease took a serious turn, and when it had been conquered, extreme exhaustion followed. There seemed little variation in the condition from day to day. Once more a deadly apathy had overwhelmed Jane Trask's body and mind; more intensified than that which had followed the birth of her child. She had no will to live; no sense of the necessity for a further struggle with circumstance. The clock ticked harsh seconds across a time which bore no significance.

Trask smoked beside her bed in the evening; occasionally reading out paragraphs from the paper. He was content in his new work, which involved no personal decisions, but could be fulfilled by a careful carrying out of the orders of others. Now that the doctor had said there was no further danger from the disease itself, but that patience, care and nourishment were required, he felt it to be only a matter of time until Jane was about again. Beef-tea and milk were efficacious foods; he ordered the blank-faced landlady to supply them. The recovery seemed prolonged, but here patience came in. Trask's patience was an acquiescing, inexhaustible quality.

Gallup returning to England before an increasing volume of sinister reports and happenings throughout Europe discovered his niece, like Mrs. Dombey, apparently slipping out of life because she cared to make no effort to remain in it.

The unfortunate woman dominated his thoughts ; for no doubt there were many of her type before her creation and would be after ; creatures fashioned like sea-shells to bear the weight of incalculable things in their congenial element, but doomed to extinction if thrust without it. The fearful romanticism of such women haunted him. What madness in a material world ! What incredible demands !

" You've been bowled over by something more than illness," he told her ; and reminded her of Henley's " Captain of our fate."

" But the century I was born in didn't allow women to be captains. If we had been taught something of the rules ; allowed to do some of the steering—Do you know the sort of things I was taught ? And the things that I wasn't ? "

He winced ; confronted with a picture of the Victorian Age other than the one presented to his youthful perceptions. He reviewed it now as a grissly Minotaur engaged upon unholy sacrifices of youth.

" You've got to come and live with me," he told her on a subsequent visit. " I've never wanted a woman to before—except once—and that was a madness."

" Why ? "

" All love is madness."

She drew a breath of exhaustion.

" Jane ! " he said explosively, " That's what is keeping you on that bed. It is. Believe me, you'll see it's all madness one day. A febrile physical condition. Don't give yourself up to it ; like one of D'Annunzio's lovers. It isn't Italy here ; and you're too brainy."

As he spoke his experience suggested that a great emotion usually triumphs over reason ; especially, he was pleased to think, with women ; who, again, were foolish enough to expect so much more from life than it could possibly offer. Though, he admitted, men had a better chance of getting what it had to offer.

He had helped her through one such crisis before, and he meant to again. It was not the programme he had mapped out for himself, but she had the power of making life appear of more interest than his programmes. Worn with her vivid sense of things, of which none in return had presented themselves vividly to her, she had fallen again into a perilous reaction of mind and body. He was reminded that our

educational and commercial systems had strangled much boyish genius, and was led to the supposition that there must probably have been women—his training led him to suppose rare—whose spirits had been wrecked by the burden of capabilities for which they could find no expression.

Would Jane, after all, be satisfied with the management of his retirement? Anyway, it offered her more chances than Trask could.

"Is Wilson married yet to the little baggage I met him with once?" he asked.

"Little baggage?"

"Yes. Have you seen her?"

"He brought her to see us."

Their eyes met. Gallup almost whistled. Presently he said, "He doesn't want a woman to love him overmuch. I daresay you have realised that. It would entail more responsibility than he has bargained for. A pleasant young man."

It seemed to him that her face lightened into tenderness; as a mother's may, looking on her child.

He made an impatient gesture.

"You can't get blood out of a stone, Jane."

She met his eyes; with a courage difficult because of her flagging spirit. "You can get growth out of a soul."

"What am I to do with you?"

"Don't help to kill what faith I have left."

She moved him more than he cared to acknowledge. On his return to his house his eyes wandered over those shelves where Romance slumbered in his library in the stories of Aucassin and Nicolette, of Fiona Macleod, the Vita Nuova. From the belated vision of his youth he recalled Romance: poor outcast from his life, and from the goals of his pursuit. He approached her by the scientific method; tracing in the ineradicable desire for her, some evidence of the reality of her being. His mother, assuredly, had been known of her—her gentle face came vividly at the thought. His sister—? No doubt she, too, had been haunted by a perverse vision of the same. Did it not also account for that of heroic he remembered about George Arrobus: the incessant labour by which he strove to satisfy the demands of his wife—was it not his offering, even if misplaced, to the fugitive goddess?

And Jane—He imaged her a vestal of the goddess's shrine.

Inviolable, and not to be dissuaded by contrary rumours and indictments.

Under the eyes of the goddess his own life was a shabby rather than a prosperous affair. But it was too late for him to invite the unbelievable Shining One to his own hearth. Nevertheless he would not traduce her again, for Jane's sake. Jane who had insisted from childhood upon building mansions not raised by hands.

His musings, taking this rarely transcendental form, advanced him no solution of the situation foreshadowed: the probability of his niece having been foolish enough to conceive a romantic passion for that amiable, but by no means remarkable young man, Wilson?

He resigned himself to the merciful offices of Time. Time was a remarkable adaptor of human affairs.

5.

Jane went to spend three months at the house of the cul-de-sac. It appeared to her as a period of unbridled and prodigious talking; in houses, on the roads; excited chatterers argued, demonstrated and disagreed. They chattered of morality, Mr. Campbell, bridge, Gauguin, Mr. Wells, votes for women, religion, and flying. The resurgence of their babblings occupied the spaces of daily papers.

Within Gallup's house was comparative peace, though Joseph and his wife considered it their duty to attempt to enliven Mrs. Trask with conversation. Their age precluded sustained effort. A young woman came in by the day to do the necessary hard work.

"Are you thinking there might be a war against them Germans, Miss Jane?" asked Mrs. Cane.

"Not likely," replied her husband. "It's only foreigners wick is so fond of fighting." He sucked his pipe in contented ignorance of the truth that his own country had been engaged in warfare for half the term of her acknowledged existence.

Jane said to Gallup, "I needn't go into the streets for exercise; the garden is big enough for me to get it there." The old fear of men and women was upon her. In a world full of hubbub and stir she appeared as a centre of negation and standstill. The world whirled round and past her;

either to goals set forth by prophets, or reeling to some unrecognised stupendous disaster. The nullity of her baffled experiences had numbed her brain ; she rendered what services were within her reach to Gallup, and to Ernest who came to stay at the week-ends. Her sympathy was tender for the stooping, silent man whose gifts of life were not required from him, even as her own had been denied.

Across the blank passage of time flickered the old and fretted concerns : " I wish you would ask Mrs. Cane to speak to that woman about those apple fritters we had last evening, Jane. I could taste the fat—beastly."

" James, dear ! You are not so young as you were. We had rather an excessive dinner."

" Excesses are human. I'm not going to feed by rote. A few disorders are natural ; and also human."

" Haven't we suffered enough from that kind of humanness ? You'd better read your Erewhon again."

" I still prefer the ancients. *Qui medice vivit, misere vivit.*"

She looked on him with admonishing, patient eyes.

" People of my age require careful cooking : reduced by the excesses, mental and physical, of the Victorian period. We suffer from an inheritance of flatulence. To balance their mental windiness they built ponderous houses and made massive furniture."

It pleased Gallup to comment upon the present and the past to Jane. He was more garrulous than of old ; and she was an intelligent listener ; though she had forced him to an old conclusion that intelligent women were a mistake. The country offered them a few grudging openings in professions ; but for the rest, the cross-between-the-angel-and-the-idiot type was most suited to the demands of the community. For the others the price was too heavy. Though, with his niece, he was aware that it wasn't the cost she would count. What had vanquished her was the obscurity and narrowness of the path whereon she sought enlightenment. Books were but a palliative before her demand for vital experience : a draught of life directly offered to herself.

She looked over at him in the growing darkness of the spring evening, and asked him the same question that Mrs. Cane had asked in the kitchen.

" Is there any real cause for supposing a war more likely now than a year ago ? "

"There are the same causes," he replied lazily. "Turkey hideously misruled: two hundred thousand of their civilian population massacred in the Balkan wars. The Russians and Roumanians still ill-treat Jews. The gentle Greek wrings wicked extortions from the Egyptian peasantry by their traders. The German seeks more places in the sun. Poland is partitioned. Secret diplomacy flourishes. Likely materials for a flare."

She sat in one of her unmoving stillnesses. He tried to concentrate his attention on a book he held. Her stillness fidgeted him.

"Why not write a book?" he jerked out. "Ruminate on paper and ventilate your brain."

She attempted a light answer but its tone was flat. "If I wrote a book it should be 'A Stupid Tragedy—My Own.'"

"Why not a comedy?"

"It would be braver," she admitted; her eyes concentrated at the deepening space of the open French window. "One ought not to be defeated; I know."

"Save in the last resort; which I suppose is the meaning of death."

Outside a blackbird was still singing. Small flowers glimmered from the borders, full of new impulses of life. A vague expectation stirred her: with it a phantasmal thought that in death, if one preserved one's courage, defeat might be challenged.

She slipped out of her chair into the hushed night garden.

6.

"The authenticity of whatever one was going to learn in the world would probably always have for its sign that one got it at some personal cost."—*Henry James.*

A few months later the House of the Cul-de-Sac had lost its owner; his niece no longer walked the garden paths with impotent will and baffled dreams.

Destiny had played one of her tremendous hazards. Civilization, having provoked it, was attempting to deal with it.

The century which had set-up efficiency and success as its

gods now evoked these deities to assert themselves. Men and women cast off their customary clothes for uniform. Ambulances and hospitals appeared whose equipment was efficiency's last word. Everybody joined a committee to justify their existence. To countervail the increasing rumour of unbelievable tortures on fields of death, there was light and indifferent laughter in the streets ; where lewd jests stared in the eyes of men, and were accepted of women. The doors of the palaces of food and amusement swung to and fro on jostling crowds. In diverse aspects London appeared as an accursed city : the derision of the Lord upon it.

Verily there was truth of a sort here, presenting itself to Jane with painful intensity and illumination.

She had persuaded Gallup to rent a small house, in a neighbourhood where she had undertaken work as a V.A.D. helper in a London hospital, on the south side of the river. A shifting population made a bid for livelihood along its desolate pavements, and subsided into secret fastnesses of poverty. Small shops stood shabbily behind the pavements, notable for their changing trades, and the torn bills in the grimy windows of those To Let. The road was divided by a network of small streets intersected by blank walls, unaccountably rising up to emphasise the sense of imprisonment ; of a lost labyrinth of humanity, whose gaoler had fallen on eternal sleep. The lives of the inhabitants were bound up in the life of the street ; which owned no history and appeared mercifully blind to any future. The air was musty and flat with the distillations from ill-conditioned bodies and clothes.

Here was the No Man's Land of peace ; whose insidious horrors were too familiar to be made the heroics of daily articles. Shrunk and grotesque figures turned into unsavoury cook shops in an attempt to encourage their negative desire for existence.

One such shop was at the corner of a narrow turning called Paradise Street. The name was extraordinarily fascinating to Jane. The first time she took Gallup to see it, three children from an unseen burrow ran into them. The smallest and grimest, raking the matted hair from her eyes, laughed to find them different to the humans she knew. Rocking unsteadily, and infecting the others with her mirth, the three went laughing down the street, which was their idea of God's world.

Jane laughed, too ; partly to encourage Gallup's acquiescence in her scheme. In the curve of Paradise Street were two flat-fronted cottages, such as may be seen anywhere in rural England. A railed space in front held an astonishing variety of flowers. Over their unassuming fronts virginia creeper trailed.

"And there is a large open yard at the back," she urged.

"What you call a good-looking neighbourhood, I suppose," he grunted.

"You'll get to your office in about twenty-five minutes. It is larger than it looks outside ; there'll be room for Ernest if he gets that post in town."

He went over the cottage with her. "Mind you it is only for the duration of the war," he warned her, as they came out again.

Something of the old fervency was in her glance. Here indeed was unlimited scope for service.

He walked on with less of satisfaction. Already the phrase "for the duration of war" had begun to have an oppressing significance. He had returned to the office from his long-anticipated retirement, for that same prescribed period ; but human and material destruction had already staggered men's calculations : it appeared probable that only the incapability of old age would see his future retirement : the word retirement was already associated with tragedy and the battlefield, not contentment and rose gardens.

They rented the house for a year, and installed in it a yellow-faced woman of unbounded tolerance ; who looked upon the war with the same unshaken philosophy as she had looked on peace.

Shopping was her great diversion ; she pursued it with increased zest on Gallup's and Mrs. Trask's behalf. As she rounded the corner of Paradise Street every evening, into the main road, she caught the glow of colour from the fire station, read hurriedly the notice board before the mission church ; passed, a little awed, by the public library and swimming baths—with their inlaid decorative panels—and saw the last glory of the day reflected from the pawnbroker's shining balls. She sniffed the air vigorously—night, paraffin lamps, and rows of bloaters. Pursuing the congenial hunting-ground of her quest she came to the road bridge over a canal, infuscated

and lost to reflections. Beyond, great gasometers reared their sinister bulk against the skies.

Jane looked upon the same sombre perspective hurrying out in the morning to the hospital ; but it did not bear the warm atmosphere of familiarity to her. She was chilled by the gaunt squalor ; which made the cottages in the bend of Paradise Street worthy, by comparison, of bestowing that name upon the place where they stood.

"Don't overdo it," expostulated Gallup ; white-haired, red-faced, irritable ; terrible to children, with his tufts of eyebrows and splenetic snorts.

"I have never been able to overdo anything ; let me make the most of this belated chance," she said.

"There'll be plenty of that kind of argument," he remarked grimly. "War is the crowning excess of which man has proved himself capable ; and drags behind it all other excesses ; the circumstances being held extenuating."

She regarded him without speaking. Tremendous contradictions of existence had forced themselves upon her at the hospital. Violent extremes of human conduct, endurance, and degradation. She was whelmed with the sense of a terrific combat ; not only on fields of recognised war, but upon every place where men and women walk : the body assertive, conquering, often hateful ; and divorced, in an awful abasement, from its companion the soul.

A key turned in the door. Trask came in ; kissed her, and went up to his room. He was expecting to get clerical work in London, now that men were to be conscripted for the army. His heavy step sounded up the creaking stairs.

The room was darkening. Jane went over to Gallup and stood at the back of his chair.

"You have always understood—things, me. You must have wondered that Ernest and I——" He waited, silent, and she resumed, "When I married I knew nothing of the physical side of love."

"I guessed," he muttered. "And I tried—but how could I ?"

She looked at him straightly, and spoke with the security of one who has learnt the exact meaning of words uttered. "You lent me books. There was this in one of them—I shall remember the words, because of having lived through the meaning of them : 'There has been a lamentable failure

to recognise the supreme importance, not only erotically but morally, of the art of love . . . It is not unfair to suppose that it is this indifference, or vulgar Philistinism, which is largely responsible for the sordid commercialism of the good people of the last century. Finding the lute and the lyre snatched from their hands they were fain to turn to a greater activity with the muck-rake . . .” Her dark eyes dwelt on him, moved—was it by the inexpiable betrayals of that century of which he was a product and she a victim, or of compassion? She continued: “That is why, I see now, I was afraid to listen about *that* truth, from anyone: It would have been given me with a muck-rake.”

“I—I don’t think Susan cared much for muck-rakes,” he half-heartedly protested.

She acknowledged the pleasantry with a half-smile.

“We are encouraged when we are young to take a pass in the examination of subjects essential to our material welfare—In the subject of marriage, which is of our very creation and existence, we are not even supposed to examine the credentials of the ceremony; let alone study the principles of the relations between men and women. That is why, I think, women don’t trust each other; because of their ignorance of the fundamentals of that which is their chief concern . . . We have taken pleasure in scoring off each other in the competition for a home.” Her voice dropped, she said, as to herself, “What is the value of a home if the spirit is homeless?”

He shook his head vaguely; finding it difficult to recognise his niece in this woman of exact statements and demands. He was forced to acknowledge a share of complicity in the use of the particular muck-rake of her condemnation. He felt tired of a sudden; with the tiredness of one who has outlived an age. If women were to effect a reconciliation between Romance, and what he had been accustomed to look upon as the Actual—the world would certainly become a different world to the one he had known.

She leaned above him and lightly touched the hair above his forehead; and spoke intimately, as just between herself and him.

“There came a day when I found myself unable to live, in marriage, with Ernest. As though, if I did, I should lose sense of any rightness and sincerity in anything. That I

must free myself . . . I tried to explain—something of what I have said to you. I don't think he was able to see what I meant. What hurt him most was doing anything different to what most people do. . . . But in the end he has won through—I mean he is satisfied ; because he has not stood in the way of another's freedom—but was generous. We are good friends. . . . Temperamentally I think he is a celibate." She added, " I expect I am an ardent woman."

The admission wrung him. In the silence which followed women's voices could be heard from the next cottage through the thin partition walls.

" Women's voices heard through a wall are generally reminiscent of murder," he growled.

She kissed him. " I'll make the grog. Have you noticed Ernest has liked to have it with you lately ? "

Waiting for the water to boil, the past century, with its harassed generations of men, appeared exculpated in its demand for alcohol. In face of the terrible mechanism of the life evolved, the spirit of man required stimulation to face its indifferent face of steel.

But beyond the awful emergencies of the present would there not be built up a world where Youth need not fear to follow its inextinguishable vision of The Beloved ?

The acts of the day appeared as the flat pictures of realities which loomed behind them : the carrying of plates and dressings along the harsh corridors of the hospital ; rows of beds and bandaged bodies ; forced gaieties of heavy-eyed nurses ; sharp reprimands ; wavering, entreating eyes of pain.

Letters from Anthony became more frequent and longer. If he wrote such long letters to Millie he must do a lot of writing, she thought ; and he disliked writing letters.

He never referred to Millie ; which silence, over the space of a year, began to trouble her. What would he do if Millie did not understand—anticipate—those daily exigencies of thought and feeling which men—and conspicuously Anthony—required that women should understand and anticipate and interpret. Her vision of Millie faltered from that of an affectionate, tender-hearted girl to something approaching a minx. There were abundant opportunities for comparisons and adjudgments at the hospital where, with all the generosity of which she was capable, she was forced to acknowledge the

existence of the minx as a well-defined and not uncommon example of woman ; unconfined to any particular period of growth. Not content with invading the streets in doll-like processions, they intruded into hospitals with offers of impudent services—hoping to mince through the wards as they minced through kinema doors. Gallup alluded to them as body-snatchers.

Meanwhile, life in Paradise Street continued its unbeaten way ; in spite of bombs dropped from the clouds, food menace, and disease. Like an over-turned ant-heap men moved to and fro in their efforts to preserve the race.

Gallup would demand how much longer Jane expected him to remain in a London slum ; the garden going to ruins in the house of the cul-de-sac. He wasn't going down to see it with a lot of invalid women pottering about. Luckless discoveries of his niece, to whom the hospitals, crowded with shattered men, could offer no succour. He shot his objections at her while Trask silently masticated opposite. At more propitious hours both men would acknowledge they were glad to be in London. Gallup was near his club ; Trask was undisturbed by the thought of time-tables—there were always buses ; and he was no mean hustler, physically.

The sallow-faced woman waited on them solicitously. They represented the maintenance, against all proposed ration schemes, of her destiny of shopping. She could not imagine Mr. Gallup short of food ; a gentleman so particular about his meals ; and Mr. Trask, who liked large helpings. Their urgently apparent demands would somehow have to be supplied, and her future was secured with theirs.

Her faith was on a level with Trask's, in the invincibility of England. Jane felt older than either of them before the considered spectacle of a world hastening to famine ; and a country whose systems and polices were being overturned and destroyed ; though men strove to repatch their outworn framework.

She met Gallup's mocking eyes.

"The women appear to be taking a turn with the muck-rake ; according to papers and reports."

She turned the old painful, absorbed look on him.

"They are seeing it work—numbers of them—for the first time. They are confused."

"They appear to me eminently calm—even in their refusal

to allow such ugly terms as muck-rake. They ran amok with the most ingenuous air of saving their country's sanity by providing a foil to war."

"There will always be mental and moral refuse," she admitted.

"Ah! You have relinquished your scheme of an impossible heaven."

"But not the setting up of a Jerusalem in England's fair and pleasant land."

A deepening affection for England possessed her; in which the need for individual service grew into a hope of common service from all, to heal a country stricken not only by war but by a dehumanised civilisation.

"Youth will conquer the cynicism of the old," she said.

Trask, lifting his head, inquired of what she spoke. An organ outside began to turn to the tune of "A Broken Doll."

Gallup flung the song at her as answer. "By your songs ye shall know them; though the title is too hopeful: these human dolls are incapable of anything as big as a break. You remember your rag dolls; capable only of appalling deterioration?"

He hustled away from the table; looking for pouch and pipe; then Trask, moving heavily, and with the evening paper under his arm.

She regarded them with something less than her habitual friendliness; with an impersonal sight, as humans who might stand in the way of Youth and its dreams; the old strong enemies of cynicism and apathy.

Both men fidgeted over the filling of pipes. It was a time when she questioned them about the happenings of their day, or brought out darning, sitting near them in a pleasant repose; her attitude part of their evening sedative, even as the tobacco and reading.

"At least, Jane," Gallup began: "We offer you some scope for your remarkable, though little exercised, capacity for handling men."

"Perhaps somebody with less capacity would have served."

Trask turned to her with his short-sighted perplexed gaze. "I'm afraid you are extra tired, Jane."

Before his appeal she lost her detachment. "Perhaps I am. Home always seems extra nice after hospital." She stifled a sense of loss in the naming of home.

Gallup recognised that though she demanded much of humanity by her faith in possible attainments of right living and thinking, she had schooled herself to accept as satisfactory so very much less than most women—especially of spirit—demand. He judged it a fatal weakness.

7.

In the 'bus on the morrow on her way to hospital, she read, kindling, extracts from a manifesto drawn up by Heidelberg students, and copied into a letter lent to her by a nurse, whose brother had recently been repatriated from Belgium. Sentences in it ran: "To awake a sense of responsibility in young men and women to have done with superficialities. Every individual must meet all sections of society as comrade. He can achieve no personally constructive work in a spiritual sense without approaching others on the basis of human mutual love and reverence. Artists and those who work for love are the only people who create anything real. The creative instincts in man are smothered by the soot and scrap-heaps of factories and cities. Only love has power to free the living impulse from suffocation. There must be no systematising of individuality. We must be revisionists of our ideas."

The youthful impetuosity of the words winged her thoughts; while her aching feet passed along weary corridors. Were not the myriad hosts of the dead calling for a new great commonwealth to be reared upon their unnumbered graves?

An evening of spring came; full of light and movement. Across the sky clouds were borne triumphantly.

Outside the cottages in Paradise Street Anthony was standing.

"Isn't it a jolly evening?" he said. The triumphing spring day was caught in their meeting eyes.

"I've got ten days embarkation leave. Shall we go for a walk? Somehow, it has always been spring when we meet!"

She turned with him. "There are only houses."

"Never mind."

They walked as far as a central thoroughfare; talking lightly of things that did not matter. They were together; under a spring sky across which it seemed possible that at

any moment the students' manifesto might be flung for all men to see.

The faces of the omnibus drivers were assured and strong as they swung up to their stopping-places; the women conductors leaned maternally to people on the steps. The huge vehicle seemed an epitome of the human race; ugly, and not smelling too sweetly upon its way; but with man at the wheel undefeated, and woman gathering travellers to rest and safety.

She smiled her thought at Anthony. He looked at her with a recognition that went deeper than thinking; and made silence an understandable thing.

They returned to a lively meal at Paradise Street. The khaki uniform might have been a symbol of some festive joust in its power as a centre of merriment. Even Trask roused himself before it; and the face of the sallow woman took on a livelier hue.

"Nothing like coming to Paradise for a final leave," Gallup said. "You can imagine Jane dragging me here! Fired by the sense of the mystic heavens she has always insisted on inhabiting."

"I never really got there," said she; with remembered truthfulness. "And they weren't mystic—always. I remember one like the transformation scene in Drury Lane pantomime."

The sallow-faced woman's face relaxed; that kind of heaven was like the only one she had had time to imagine.

"Later, there were the poets for a heavenly Baedeker; and a Radiant Lover in the place of the Almighty," continued Gallup.

She coloured at the shrewd thrust.

Anthony turned to her reassuringly. Had he not known her at the beginning of these heavens?

Gallup, looking from one to the other, with a movement of perplexity pushed back the curls on his forehead, and lifted a reflective glass: "*A la mémoire de ma jeunesse*," he drank.

Talk became less transcendental, moving among the worn topics of the collapse of the National Service Scheme, and the inadequate handling of food control.

"And men still claim the monopoly of such posts!" said Jane, with light scorn.

Anthony made her a concession. "Women might have

more say in food matters as they are used to catering," he admitted.

As she acknowledged a certain sententiousness in the words, she reflected that, at least, he had not chosen to pour himself into one of the non-expanding thought-moulds dear to many as refuges of safety in a world of inexcusable flux.

Gallup sat fingering his glass while cogitating how far his niece had employed that art of life, which consists of making others feel as we feel, upon this young man. He was yet to learn that she could carry it to its supreme function ; and by her own conviction uplift a young man of few convictions, to vindicate the faith and quest which she had followed through her term of years.

It took him some time before he realised this achievement of hers ; by which she wrested from her days a lustre which shed light upon the whole ; and by which she could measure her life-path as a thing of continuity ; crowned by that which she had set out to seek.

He concluded she might, after all, escape that middle-aged encounter to which he had invited her ! Surmising, with a glance of regret at his own fate, that Jane would have no middle-age ; which is a convenient term for spiritual overthrow. His own middle-age had extended over so long a period ! It started somewhere about his twenty-fifth year.

"Some men have luck," he threw across at Wilson.

"Yes, sir," replied Anthony, with his disarming diffidence. "I never thought I should be able to do much—for anybody, country or anything—and now I've got the chance."

He relapsed a little in his chair on the words ; hoping that he would in truth satisfactorily face this amazing chance life had offered him.

"And you're not married ; so you've no anxieties on that count."

Wilson stiffened, and looked at Gallup. "No, I'm not married. My engagement is broken off."

No one offered a comment. Jane roused herself to talk in the gentle voice he remembered when anything had troubled him ; while he was thinking how he might tell her that, somehow, it wasn't so bad a hurt as she would be feeling it to be.

"I am working at the hospital near. The experience has been a tremendous privilege . . . Sometimes a difficult one.

Men want to be led so much more than one could have expected. They don't stop to enquire about your qualifications ; they don't seem to want the responsibility of thought."

"Men are glad to be led so long as you will lead them along the kind of path with which they are familiar," Gallup observed. "They can stand physical discomfort, but not mental."

"No, sir ; that's true," agreed Wilson.

Trask nodded at him opposite ; looking upon him as something of a hero already, by right of being a soldier.

"This is like a home," breathed Anthony ; looking back upon the gloomy barrack-house of his initiation as a fighter.

Jane turned kindling eyes on him.

Trask said in emphatic slow tones, "She couldn't live without a home."

Sudden hot tears gathered behind the young man's eyes.

"No," he said hoarsely ; "No."

As they stood on the landing to say good-night, she said :

"We have no spare-room here. There are only three bedrooms, and one that we use as Uncle Jim's study ; I have put you up a bed in there."

Trask with his slow smile, hoped he would sleep well ; the study, he remarked, opened on to a yard, so there was plenty of air.

Anthony looked at them. There seemed to be some essential understanding between them, before which he stood a little baffled, as before the poise of souls not striving with each other, but self-determined.

"Perhaps they just got tired of each other," Jane surmised, of the broken engagement, as she sought her room. She, too, was acutely conscious of an intensified atmosphere of peace under the cottage roof this night : the sheltering home-place of which she was guardian. The place from which Anthony was "going out."

9.

"If you never commit yourself, you never express yourself, and your self becomes less and less significant and decisive."—*P. H. Wicksteed.*

Through a stroke of luck—the matron had received an advance of salary—Jane was given a week's holiday ; after

a year of more exacting work than even she had ever desired.

On the first morning of leisure, while soft rain fell, Anthony told her of Millie.

"I don't suppose she ever really loved me," he concluded ; surprised anew that this could be so ; remembering kisses he had given her ; and the things she had urged him to buy for their home together.

"There are only a few people who love," said Jane.

"Yes, that is true." He was further surprised, by the calmness of his speech upon the wound of a heart deep enough, he had imagined, to preclude calmness. Perhaps he, like Millie, was incapable of love : a depressing admission.

"I hate unfaithfulness," he blurted out ; and turned to her with an appeal to justify at least this much faith in himself.

But Jane was not looking at him. She was sitting immersed in an old chair of Gallup's, and he was conscious of that halt in her attention which he remembered in the old days, when she had brought her hero to some breathless entanglement and was not sure how he was to be extricated. He waited—as he used to wait. Before him he saw both the child and the woman.

Presently he made a grasping movement at the leather strap across his tunic. In a profound insurgence of emotion he discovered that he had been more faithful than he had recognised. Always—it had been Jane.

She raised her head, and saw a different Anthony from the one of her memories : one freed from the habitual hesitations and repressions. His face dominated hers ; with challenging eyes. Under stress of the words he uttered she recognised that he demanded equal truth from her.

"It's you and me. It has always been you and me," he said.

She sat with indwelling, motionless eyes ; conscious that the hour had come when it was imperative to be true to her Self. The Self preserved with much difficulty ; of limited experiences ; of gropings for the light, penetrating the obstructive routine of the days. The Jane, who had sometimes been worsted, and had striven anew to shape herself to the Vision ; to become what she really was : the ancient struggle of mankind. Becoming that, she would become an authentic note in the harmony of the soul of the race.

He stood looking upon her, while his mind ranged the years of his life ; years upon which he had had so little grip ; his fear of truth ; his fear of his own body and spirit.

Now he was going out—perhaps to death—and he had missed Love. A poor, cheated Self looked down upon his body. His eyes filled with desolation. He saw in her all that he had lacked himself. Their mutual reciprocations—spiritual, mental, physical—the intimate complex of their beings, dependent each on the other for the enlightenment of their destiny, became apparent to him. Tremendous issues, which his ignorance—their ignorance—had led them to avoid.

He stretched hands out to her, and she rose and gripped them : “ My friend,” she said. “ Always my dearest friend.”

“ Somehow, Jane,” he replied, with a queer boyish smile. “ Somehow I’m your lover.”

They stood, lightly swaying ; withdrawn from the limitations with which men concern themselves : the beginnings and endings ; the barriers and customs. They knew themselves to be of the stuff by which Time is measured : the creative material of humanity ; victorious though kingdoms and civilizations shake down into oblivion . . .

They walked to a park later, and talked of the chronicle of their days : of their frustrated search for the love which would have lent to the hours their initial impetus and savour : of the lost years obscured by ignorance, and chilled with perversions of natural impulses and aims ; artificial in its standards and values. Their youth rose before them as part of a vast immolation of the youth of the nation.

“ There must be a League of Youth,” she cried.

He knew that she followed the significations of these things with clearer insight than he could bring to them. This brought him a strange new sense of security, as though her sight sufficed for both, and would go with him through whatever of confusion there was before him.

By his look on her she understood that she thus blessed the springs of his being. In a soaring moment of happiness she gathered the glowing impulses and dreams of the past into a fervent pulse of living.

“ *Anthony.*”

“ *Jane.*”

The sound of the familiar naming recalled them to the world of names, taboos, and rules.

With eyes on the path in front of them, he said: "Jane, the holidays we would have had! . . . There is a row of cottages on the quietest road in the world. I've never forgotten it. We stayed one night there—my father and I. I had never wished so much to be alone. But now—There are hills, with heather, all round; and the gulls come over from the sea, ten miles away. There is a loch near, and two running streams. By the end of the cottages is a mill-pond. The women hang their clothes out to dry on the bushes by the road. No railings enclose the cottages. It is a white road, and leads to a pine wood."

"Do trains go there?" Jane asked.

10.

"Even in the farthest spheres the poignant syllables 'I' and 'Thou' will surely still be heard; and a thousand deaths shall not avail to exhaust their meaning or to make of Love a pale and cold abstraction."—*Edward Carpenter.*

During the first week in May 1917 the fighting at the front was fiercest around Fresnoy; which had been captured by the Canadians on the third of May, but which was not to remain long in the hands of the Allies.

Near the village, from which the beleaguered town of Lens could be plainly seen, was stationed the company to which Anthony Carmichael Wilson was attached as first lieutenant.

Here, with other young men who had once played for safety, he rose and laid down in an obliterated world of massacre, where there was safety for nothing.

Spectres of trees kept company with the spectred dead. A stark wall in front of the dug-out was unconnected with anything that life had known; perhaps it suggested a fictitious refuge from the hurtling death around. The ground was beginning to harden from the slimy sea of mud which had provided the last ignominious agony of the scene during April. A livid light from the infected air lay at dusk upon the water of the shell-holes.

Day followed after day of Last Judgments. Yet courage

was not extinguished in those who faced them. Perhaps they had wrested from out the distorted face of the earth a new knowledge and a new hope . . .

After a night of raids Wilson's company was told off to the extreme left of a section moving on a small frontage to test the enemy's strength.

That the enemy was strong was known. The Commanding Officer looked kindly at the figure in front of him, turning to go on hearing instructions.

"It probably may be hot work in that corner. But I can depend on you carrying the men with you."

"Yes, sir," said the young officer; in his cool pleasant voice . . .

They advanced in the twilight verges of day. The town of Lens reared immaterial and without substance through a mist which held more light than moisture. The Lieutenant in charge felt curiously immaterial himself; though acutely conscious of his own reality as partaker in some tremendous move of life.

The evidences of uncertainty and caution, which had marked him in other days, were effaced by his sense that he had abandoned his body—the body which had been his immediate concern—and that a Self of assured courage and decision had taken command of it; a Self convinced of its capacity to triumph over the concentration of steel and fire which sought to destroy it. He moved as one aware only of the triumphing Spring behind the tramping footsteps, and of victory ahead. The high beating of his heart invested his going with a pulse which appeared as the pulse of the world.

He reached a place which, at a distance, bore evidence of having been cast up in mounds: he now saw that the mounds were dead men. Not all dead apparently; there were movements—a heave and subsidence.

A tingling took his limbs; and for a moment the stick in his hand hung limp.

He heard the feet of the men he was leading; and recovered himself.

Though he trod soil of another and anguished land, it was to the sense of his own land that his feet pressed forward. He thought of it in strange new terms of exaltation and affection, with which as though indissolubly one with it, was the

face of a woman with deep unforgettable eyes. He pressed on up the rising ground to the sinister semblance of a wood, where enemy machine guns were hidden.

The wood, which had been silent, became a place of malignant sounds : strugglings, groans, imprecations.

He thought he stumbled over a tree, and was aware that his left arm was useless. He gripped the small black pistol tighter in his hand ; and jumped over wreckage, bodies, and wire, nearer and nearer to the rat-tat of a gun whose gunners were becoming visible.

Rending noises shivered the air about him, so that he was scarcely conscious at last when the nearer menace of fire had ceased ; but he knew that he saw no longer the faces of the gunners.

Again he leapt forward ; and the wood closed round him with sudden overpowering darkness.

The next thing he saw was a full moon riding in a silent sky. He was alone.

"We must have settled them," he concluded ; and that brought him such complete satisfaction that it seemed possible just to lie and look on the moon, and try to remember exactly what had happened.

It was absurd how drowsy he was. He had not the slightest desire to move.

The moon climbed higher in the sky, and made sheeny patches on moist places around him. The battlefield was very luminous. There were other pale gleams near. If they were dead faces they did not disturb him.

He realised, at last, that he must have come some distance from that demoniacal wood of machine guns, because near him—his feet were indeed touching it—was a monster shell-hole that he had noted in passing, and which could not have been more than half-a-mile from his dug-out.

Rousing himself with difficulty he raised his head, and saw that his left arm and also his thigh were bandaged.

"Funny ! I can't remember anything about it." He moved his tongue in his mouth, and concluded that the taste in it was from morphia tablets. It was that which accounted for his drowsiness. One of those good fellows must have attended to his wounds and given him the tablets.

He decided to make a move and crawl back and surprise them.

Yet he still lay there. Perhaps because on a wave of consciousness he heard the notes of a bird. It was the nightingale which had sung the whole of the past week ; thinking only of its own heart amid strange uproar and alarms, in a spinney not far removed from the front line of defence.

He closed his eyes again while it sang him back to England . . . England, that he had once thought of as passing away like Carthage and Rome. That was a stupid thing to think.

He laughed weakly, opened his eyes, and saw upon the other side of the gleaming shell-hole, half filled with water, the body of a man. His face was turned to the skies, his arms flung out at right angles : a human cross. . . In the tangled maze of his thinking he identified the figure with a sacred cross on which hung a crucified body. . . . And the man was lying there, and he, too, that England might not pass away like those other dead cities. Of that he was sure.

The nightingale did not cease singing ; carrying his spirit down green lanes flecked with the foam of wild cherry ; and showing him homes whose windows shone hopefully through evenings of soft grey rain.

Presently, upon a white road, he passed to the open door of an unfenced cottage. None of froward intentions would seem to pass that way, for his boots had been set in the road to dry in the sun, and clothes were spread upon the young green of the hedge.

He did not open his eyes any more because of weariness ; but he saw that a woman came to the door of the cottage on the road ; and they laughed together. His content was such that he heard no longer the song of the nightingale.

She never moved from the open space of the door ; with deep remembered eyes on him, and smiling mouth.

The moon slipped down from the place of the battlefield. The darkness was interstrewn with gleams which sometimes he knew as stars, and sometimes as flowers from a transcendent day of earth.

Upon the hour of dawn—still smiling with the gladness of a man who has achieved a thing greater than his belief in himself—the figure by the shining rain-pit made a convulsive movement, and jerked incontinently forward.

Upon either side of the pit lay a human cross of English name.

Above their prone figures there glimmered for a space a

condensation of light ; shaped as their forms were shaped, and lingering in farewell, before leaving the mortal bodies for the unguessed country of spirits.

EPILOGUE

" I too will set my face to the wind and throw my handful of seed on high."—*William Sharpe*.

AT a date not far removed from the cessation of the Great War, there might be seen, at varying hours of the day, an eager-faced woman rounding the corner of a main thoroughfare in London into a street named Paradise. So precipitate was her manner upon coming in sight of the street, that it might have been inferred that she had discovered Paradise in it.

Sometimes she collided with a child, cherishing a similar illusion, and they would look into each other's faces and laugh.

As she neared two flat-faced cottages, made kindlier by brave climbing plants, the satisfaction of her face dissolved into a ripple of affection, which played over the unassuming front of her home-place as though to bless it for continuing to stand there to receive her.

Within, a sallow-faced woman relaxed her habitual habit of indifference to inquire if Mrs. Trask were as done-up as she had been yesterday.

" I wasn't really done-up. Not more than can be helped."

From without came the murmuring resurgence of a harassed world : Floods of talk ; floods of print ; street-corner meetings ; unnumbered committees ; frantic attempts to reconstruct a social fabric whose foundation was rotted ; fanatical endeavours to sweep away all past experience and to build without a foundation. Commerce and society both engaged in the perilous task of underpinning tottering structures. Religion hesitating in her temples. Women wronged—and wronging. . . And the tragic bewildered multitude aware—yet with so little sense of direction and hope of attainment—that the Rights of Man had flamed up again in the world of men : that men were greater than machinery, commerce and caste.

Jane Trask, withdrawn for a space from the vortex, dwelt

on the blessedness of homes : of the woman's faculty for building them ; of their deterioration in a century of acquisition ; of the re-vivifying sense of them as places of freedom and tranquillity, in a world slow to be shaped into order and chances of rest.

There came to her ears as she sat there, body and mind relaxed in the blessed quiet of a familiar hearth, the sound of running feet and the laughter of young voices. Of her own activities, following on the rout of civilization, these sounds were the symbol to her of that which should endure.

When Gallup asked her what the procession of young girls were doing who sought the cottage after school and work, and appeared to be engaged—ecstatically was his word—on an incessant spring-cleaning of the next cottage, secured by his niece for the enterprise, she would tell him on a note between gaiety and earnestness, " I think of it as The Place of Recognitions."

Through succeeding months he read into that naming many meanings, some supplied by her, as when she said : " We have to learn when young to recognize what it means to be a woman. And that in a different sense from familiar definitions." Again, when he discovered those same young people busy painting walls and wood-work with vivid blues and yellows : " If homes were beautiful there would be no more wars. . . They have begun to see that home-building can be as wonderful as nest-building for birds."

At such words he recalled the small exile of the House of the Avenue of Roses ; and judged that her later consciousness of the dumb suffering of that exile had led her to seek to invoke in others her own dream of a re-created home : where, as she told him in lighter mood, " We shall do away with your paralyzed female ; and the society of segregated mutually-suspicious groups ; and learn to be simple in morals as well as in art."

He was led to admit that perhaps, after all, she had discovered her art : the material to be shaped—Youth. Though she refused to deny her personality even to gain that dearest material for human moulding the children of her spirit and flesh. He realized that if she made surrender to that she would not be Jane.

And if life is to be valuable it means preserving the individual as well as the race, he concluded ; and marvelled at her

courage—the specific feminine courage—triumphing over personal loss, and cherishing its anguished experience as the inspiration of its service for others. At her use of the word home he saw Romance in her impaled by a dart, yet surrounding its incurable hurt by all the signs of a blessed immunity from pain.

It was for an old man and the slow-pulsed Trask that she invested the rooms with that intimate sense of content, and that her eyes rested on them as on inmates of a shrine built for a dearer companionship. The very atmosphere appeared to offer a solution to the shaken, suspicious world without. As though Romance would yet triumph over civilization ; offering its shining solitudes for refuge and healing.

Something he saw, sometimes, of triumph in the quiet of her regard, as though the hero of her childhood's belief and of the mirror of her dreams had not been denied her. Simple and ordinary young man though he may have appeared upon the goings of his daily life, Destiny had presented him transformed, as in the most shining splendours of legend and history. Delivered to death on a charge as heroic and as fated ; and linked him for all time with the heroes of mankind.

Jane moving steadfastly through the waiting hours of life, seeking to translate her dream of love to the entreating ignorance of youth, beheld in the stillness of the sky and upon the roar of the streets, the image and murmur of a face and voice one with hers from the beginning of Time to the unimaginable gates of the desired heaven.

Upon the indestructible highways of humanity the advancing feet of the new-born were hasting to their work of reconstruction ; a reconstruction beyond doubting : Above them the stir of a great sound, even the dead come to judgment.

What though strange waters of loss and suffering passed by her : floods of a drowning civilization : What waters can quench love, and what floods prevail against it ?

THE END

By the same Author

The Spirit and the Law

(A Romance of Life and of Dartmoor)

The Nation.—"Genuine delicacy and boldness of suggestion. Achieved force and distinction of dialogues and situations."

The Bookman.—"A powerful and deeply interesting novel. It handles a great moral problem courageously, and with a narrative cunning scarcely excelled even by our greatest living novelist."

Manchester Guardian.—"Mrs. Moore writes as out of a fine experience—thoughts and ideas honestly come by and strongly held."

Saturday Westminster.—"A moving and sincere piece of work."

The Observer.—"A novel of fine quality. The picture has poetry and passion, the problem is a genuine one."

Teddy, R.N.D.

(A Light-Hearted Story of the War)

Saturday Westminster.—"A charming sketch of the making of a civilian soldier. We like best the chapter where Teddy shows the mouse to his mother."

Sheffield Telegraph.—"One of the books of the year. To know Teddy is to love him."

Liverpool Post.—"A joyous book, full of the radiance of youth."

*Of Mrs. Moore's other Novels the
Press says :*

The Athenæum.—"Sincerity of purpose, keen but sympathetic outlook on life, and distinction of style."

Mr. James Douglas (in the *Star*).—"Bears comparison with the novels of the late Mrs. Craigie. Sincerity is tremendous. Sees life with an emotional honesty which is sometimes startling."

Daily Chronicle.—"Presents the complexity of life with clearness, restraint, and sympathy."

The Scotsman.—"A thoughtful woman who sees life and love with a tender and an acute vision."

Morning Post.—"Her wit is real and depends on a true intellectual basis."



